

BUNYAN'S COUNTRY

STUDIES IN THE

TOPOGRAPHY

OF THE

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

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A. Y. FOSTER, M.A.

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BUNYAN'S COUNTRY

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The Ivy-clad Ruins of Houghton House.
("The House Beautiful.")

BUNYAN'S COUNTRY

Studies in the Bedfordshire Topography
of the Pilgrim's Progress

BY

ALBERT J. FOSTER, M.A.

Vicar of Wootton, Bedfordshire

AUTHOR OF "TOURIST'S GUIDE TO BEDFORDSHIRE," "TOURIST'S GUIDE TO HERT-
FORDSHIRE," "THE OUSE," "ROUND ABOUT THE CROOKED SPIRE," "THE
CHILTERN HUNDREDS," "THE ROBBER BARON OF BEDFORD CASTLE,"
"AMPTHILL TOWER," ETC.

With Illustrations by the Author



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1901

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Dedication.

DEAR DR. BROWN,

As you are undoubtedly Bunyan's chief biographer, I thank you for kindly allowing me to dedicate this little book to yourself, and I gladly do so in the hope that it may to some extent prove a useful companion to your "John Bunyan, His Life, Times, and Work."

I am,

Yours truly,

A. J. FOSTER.

WOOTTON VICARAGE,
BEDFORDSHIRE, 1901.

“In every nursery ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress’ is a greater favourite than ‘Jack the Giant Killer.’ Every reader knows the straight and narrow path as well as he knows a road in which he has gone backward and forward a hundred times. This is the highest miracle of genius—that things which are not should be as though they were,—that the imagination of one mind should become the personal recollections of another. And this miracle the tinker has wrought. There is no ascent, no declivity, no resting-place, no turnstile, with which we are not perfectly acquainted.”—*Macaulay’s Essays*.

PREFACE.

MUCH has been written of and concerning John Bunyan, and the present little sketch is only proposed as a sort of supplement to the many biographies of this remarkable man which have appeared from time to time during the last two hundred years. It does not profess to tell anything new about Bunyan. It is simply an attempt to show that he reproduced, in the first part of "The Pilgrim's Progress," scenes and localities which were familiar to him, and as such it is offered as a small contribution to Bunyanistic literature.

A. J. F.

WOOTTON VICARAGE.

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BUNYAN'S COUNTRY.

CHAPTER I.

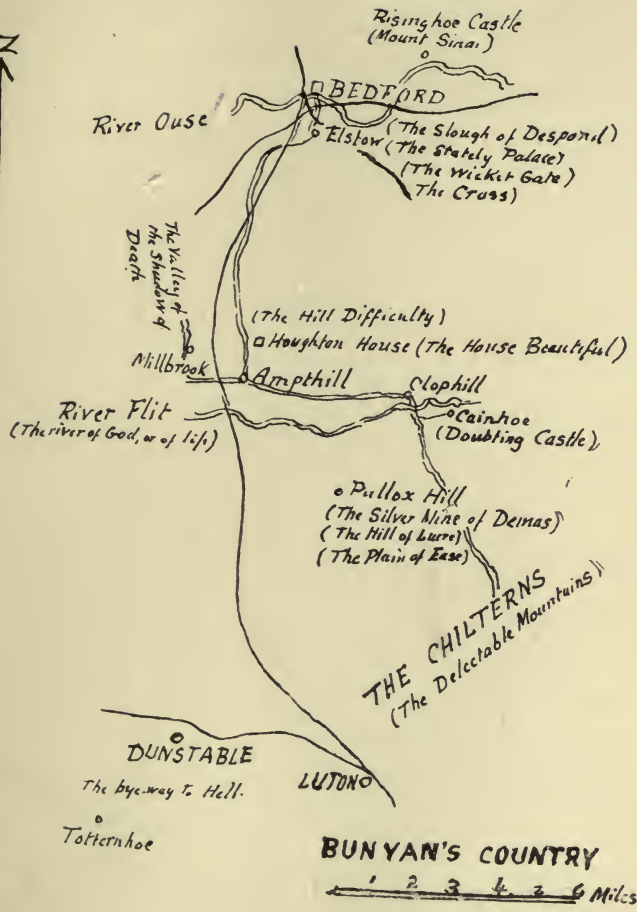
THE BEDFORDSHIRE OF BUNYAN.

The Country of the "Pilgrim's Progress"—The Story—Elstow—
The Riverside Meadows—The Ampthill Hills—The Chilterns
—Castles, Religious Houses, Mansions—Natural Scenery,
Villages, Streams, and Roads.

OTHERS have written of John Bunyan, of his life, of his work, and above all of the characters which he has created. We do not profess to tell again an oft-told tale. We do not ask our readers to search again for the homely remarks, the pungent wit, the exquisite insight into character, which is to be found in the writings of the self-taught Bedfordshire genius. We shall ask our readers to take the "Pilgrim's Progress" again into their hands, it is true, but we are going to look into that

immortal work with a special purpose in view, one which has, perhaps, never been in our minds before when we turned its pages. We propose to take the scenes described on the wayfarer's journey, and to give to each its local habitation and its name; so far as is possible, and to show that Bunyan's imagination was stimulated by what he saw around him. There will be much guess-work it is true, but we shall attempt to prove our assertions as we go along, starting as we shall do with a few postulates, as we may call them.

It will, we think, be conceded by all that earliest impressions of surroundings are the most vivid and the most enduring. The man remembers best of all the house in which he lived as a child; the garden in which he played, the street or the road along which he walked when first he emerged from infancy. Next we may assume that in early days John Bunyan never wandered far from home. He was, it is said, and with probable truth, a soldier in the Parliamentary army, and as such he served at the siege of Leicester in his earliest manhood, but he had impressed upon





his mind scenes of rural life and landscape such as they were, and are to be found, in Bedfordshire, before he made acquaintance with more extended Midlands. Further, the point which we propose to prove is that all or almost all that Bunyan describes in the "Pilgrim's Progress," the frame, as we may call it, of the picture story, is what he really saw with his bodily eyes, though his imagination needed to give here and there the touches necessary to make the stage fit for the action of Christian and his fellow-players. And this stage will, indeed, be a circumscribed one, for it will be a little bit of Bedfordshire, measured by a line only some fifteen miles in length, on the southern, or Elstow side, of the county town itself.

For, as all the world knows, the village of Elstow, situated only a mile or so from the outskirts of Bedford, was the birthplace of Bunyan, and with Elstow we may say his story starts :

" His native home deep imag'd in his soul."

The story begins, it is true, with Elstow, but it must not be supposed that all the scenes

follow one another in successive order as they would present themselves to a man tramping along one particular road.

That the scenes do thus succeed one another from time to time we hope to show, but we are not going to assert that Bunyan had one, and one only, ride or walk which he placed before himself as he wrote. There were many familiar objects which he was going to press into his service, but he was going to pick them up here and there as he rambled along singing—for it is almost a poem—his history of the Christian pilgrim, and locating his traveller now and again in places which we may visit and find to be actualities at the present day.

But before we start from Elstow Green we have a few words to say about the county of Bedford itself. Some people talk of *flat* Bedfordshire as if it were an extension of the fens into the Midlands. But those who so speak know but little of the small though interesting county which they thus describe. There is plenty of other scenery to be found besides that of the rich far-stretching meadows which

line the banks of the Ouse. To the north we have the clay uplands which form the dividing line between the valley of the Ouse and that of the Nene; next we have the meadowed valley which we have already mentioned, then we have the lovely pine-clad hills and fern-decked coombes which stretch right across the county from Woburn to Ampthill and Sandy; and then further to the south we have the Chiltern Hills, with their wide expanse of chalk downs forming the furthest border of the county. With the Ouse Valley itself and with the country south of Bedford we are certain Bunyan was well acquainted, and it is in this particular locality that we shall wander with the "Pilgrim's Progress" for our guide-book.

Each page of the history of our island may be here opened on the spot. On the downs to the south we find the hut-circles of the earliest inhabitants of whom we have any trace. The camps of the Britons when they had become a set of tribes who warred one with another may be found in the same locality or elsewhere in our district. The clumps of firs on the sand-

stone ridge in the centre of the county often crown some little fortress mound, steep and fosse-girt, as where, for instance, a tiny earth-work commands the little village of Liddington at its feet; and further to the south on the chalk downs which we have already mentioned, we find similar camps, circular in form originally, but altered and changed so that the fortress has become an enlarged and rectangular enclosure, as at Totternhoe. And such alteration and enlargement tell us, say antiquaries, that here the Romans had seized and occupied the fortresses of those whom they had conquered.

And when the Saxons had come across the North Sea to settle in the island which they were in time to call England, they buried their eorls, their leaders in war, beneath rounded barrows, which rise above the earlier hut-circles on the chalk downs.

Then Christianity came, and church and religious house in turn arose, each with its distinguishing mark. And side by side with these were built Norman keep and Plantagenet fortress, and lastly, when mediævalism had disappeared with its castles and abbeys, man-

sions of magnificence and beauty were reared,



From Lidlington Clump.

ofttimes in the very places which had been occupied by these earlier buildings.

And what did Bunyan find of such remains to help him in his descriptive work? The abbeyes were gone, but their buildings remained in part, turned to other uses it is true, but accompanied by old traditions. The remembrance of the Benedictine nuns of Elstow, "the ladies," as the peasants termed them, had not died out in a hundred years. The mounds on which castle keeps had once stood remained as witnesses to the days when Barons struggled against one another, or even against the king himself. Many a time must Bunyan have passed under the lofty mound at Bedford which was once crowned by the shell keep of the De Beauchamps, a short-lived fortress, which, after a brief life of less than one hundred and fifty years, was destroyed when the youthful Henry III. ousted the infamous Fulke de Breauté and his robber crew from their stronghold. Farther afield he would find similar mounds, as at Eaton Socon, where another family of the De Beauchamps commanded from their castle another portion of the Ouse Valley, and as at Cainhoe, where the castle of the St. Amands had once domineered that of

the Flit. Did he pursue his walks for business or for pleasure as far as the Chilterns he would survey the huge earthworks raised by Britons and Romans. Truly he had plenty of material wherewithal to construct his "Doubting Castle."

And of mansions with which he could build his "House Beautiful" he had examples close at hand, in his own village, the home of the Hillersdens, built at the end of the preceding century, on the site of the domestic buildings of "the ladies of Elstow," and at Houghton Conquest, where we see, still "beautiful" in its ruin, the stately dwelling of the Herberts and the Bruces.

Of the natural scenery of this part of the county, such as Bunyan describes, we find examples everywhere. How he loves to dwell on the slow-moving streams, the spreading meadows, the orchards and the gardens. He would find these in his own Ouse Valley or in that of the neighbouring Flit. Nor would such architectural features as we have mentioned be wanting—

“ Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide ;
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees.”

Amidst such scenes in pleasant Bedfordshire the boy wandered, already perhaps the dreamer and the muser. When the painful and remarkable mental conflict through which he tells us he passed in his early married life, had come to an end, scenes which had once caused him fear, now gave him peace and calm. The tower of Elstow, the tiles of the houses in Bedford, no longer seemed to him in his strange day-dreams ready to fall upon him. The mere puddles on the road no longer affrighted him, because he had not sufficient faith to dry them up, as Elijah had dried up Jordan. The elm trees, the predominant tree of Bedfordshire, no longer filled him with dread lest he should dream of falling from their summits into bottomless gulfs. Surrounding walls no longer in his despair shut him out from sunshine. All was peace and calm in his breast when, in his second imprisonment in the borough gaol on the ancient bridge of Bedford, he sat him down to write

his history of Christian. Save where the purposes of the tale required a massive castle, a burning or a falling mountain, an engulfing bog, or a dismal "valley of the shadow of death," he loved to paint his scenes in bright colours. Bedfordshire streams, and Bedfordshire roads and lanes and footpaths, Bedfordshire mansions and gardens, and Bedfordshire hills were to him places pleasant to look upon, and pleasant to dwell amongst, if the pilgrim but remembered that he was only a passer-by on his way to another and better land. "When the morning was up they led him to the top of the house, and bid him look south, so he did. And, behold, at a great distance he saw a most pleasant mountainous country, beautified with woods, vineyards, fruits of all sorts, flowers also, with springs and fountains, very delectable to behold. Then he asked the name of the country. They said it was Emanuel's Land, and it is as common, said they, as this hill is to and for all the pilgrims."

CHAPTER II.

IN BUNYAN'S VILLAGE.

Elstow—Name of the Parish—Countess Judith and her foundation—Power of the Abbey—Abbess Elizabeth Hervey—Bishop Gravesend and the Abbey—Enquiry into Charges—Bishop Longland and the Abbey—Enquiry into Discipline—The Dissolution—Abbess Elizabeth Bayfield—The Sisters of the “House Beautiful”—The Water-side Meadows—The Slough of Despond—Risinghoe—Mount Sinai—Elstow Church—The Wicket-gate and the Tower of Beelzebub—The Chapter House—The House of the Interpreter—The Mansion of the Hillersdens—The Stately Palace—The Cross on the Green.

WE are going to begin with the assumption that Bunyan starts his pilgrim in his own village, and there brings him through many scenes before he moves him further.

The village of Elstow is but a small one, and though it is not above a mile from the outskirts of Bedford, is quite a rural spot, and possesses one of the largest greens in the county. On the south side of this green is

the church, on the east is the village street, and in the open space towards the east stands a fine old timbered building known as the Moot Hall. Not far off is the stump of what was once a stone cross. Such village crosses are by no means unknown in Bedfordshire.

In the minds of most people, Elstow is connected only with the name of John Bunyan, but it had a history of its own long before his time. The name of the parish itself points us back to Saxon times, and even refers back to the days when the Romans ruled in Britain, for the word Stow, station or place, has been joined to the name of Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, though in modern spelling only the central portion of the lady's name has been left in that of the village.

Helena was famous both in Roman Britain and in Saxon England, since she was, according to some, a British princess—though this is perhaps a twelfth-century fiction of Geoffrey of Monmouth—and also because her son was proclaimed Emperor at York. Mediæval hagiography venerated her as the mother of the first Christian ruler of the Roman empire, and

the discoverer of the remains of the cross beneath the ruins at Jerusalem; and many famous churches were dedicated in her honour. Great St. Helen's church in the city of London, is sometimes called the Westminster Abbey of the city on account of the number of burials of distinguished persons which have taken place within its walls, and other churches of St. Helen are to be found throughout the country.

The dedication of the church at Elstow was changed in after years, and it is now that of St. Mary and the Holy Trinity, but the name of the village continues as before, the Stow or station of Helen. Elsewhere in England the name remains intact as at St. Helen's in Lancashire, and at St. Helen's in the Isle of Wight; but here in Bedfordshire the name has gone through strange transformations. The first letter was soon lost, and we find in old documents the name spelt as Elnestowe, Elmestowe, Alnestowe, and, most strange of all, Aunestowe. This last name is evidently a play on words, *aune* being the French for *ell*.

It was in the eleventh century that Elstow became better known, since it was the place



Elstow Green. (The Cross and Vanity Fair.)



selected for the foundation of what proved to be a famous Benedictine nunnery. This Abbey was very nearly of royal origin, for its foundress was Judith, niece of William the Conqueror, and widow of Waltheof, Earl of Northampton, who, after his execution at Winchester by order of the uncle of his wife, was regarded as a Saxon martyr. Judith held lands, so the book of "Domesday" tells us, in Elstow, as well as in neighbouring Bedfordshire parishes, and with these lands, or a portion of them, she endowed her Abbey. In time other possessions were added, and they included, as was so often the case with religious houses, the rectories of many villages. The churches of these parishes were for a time served by removable chaplains or curates appointed by the monasteries, but in time these priests became permanent vicars or representatives of the patrons, hence the distinction between rectors and vicars.

The Abbey of Our Lady and the Holy Trinity at Elstow waxed prosperous and rich, and amongst other rights which the Abbess possessed was that of holding a fair which lasted

four days, and doubtless brought in a goodly sum to the Abbey in the matter of tolls and other payments. It is said that these fairs were continued after the dissolution of the nunnery ; and if this was the case we may say that John Bunyan was able to draw his description of *Vanity Fair*, in heightened colours let us charitably hope, from what he had witnessed yearly on the green of his native village.

It may be easily understood that with all these rights, duties, and possessions to attend to, the hands of the Abbess were pretty nearly full ; and there was another officer, the Prioress, whose work it was to superintend the discipline and arrangements of the community itself. In fact the Abbess became a great territorial lady, and lived in her own dwelling or *lodgings* apart from the other nuns, and, in later days, surrounded by some amount of pomp and ceremony, with certain sisters told off to serve as *chaplains*, in imitation of an Abbot or Bishop.

Elstow was an aristocratic nunnery and many of the sisters were of good county

families. Such a one was Elizabeth Hervey, one of a well-known family at Thurleigh, a village to the north of Bedford. There is an excellent brass to this lady in the church. In the centre of the slab is the Abbess herself in her Benedictine robes, and against her right shoulder rests her pastoral staff of office. A legend on a brass scroll which proceeded from her mouth has been removed, and so has a brass above her head. Of four coats of arms which occupied the four corners of the slab, one only remains, and this one brass bears on the sinister side the lady's family arms. An inscription which runs round the edge of the slab gives her name and office, but the date of her death is left blank. In all probability the brass was prepared by Elizabeth Hervey in her own life-time, and in the troublous days which followed the inscription was not completed. This is not by any means the only example of such an omission. Abbess Hervey died, as we learn from the diocesan register at Lincoln, in 1524.

All notices in any way bearing on Elstow

Abbey were a few years ago extracted from various documents in the Rolls Office by Mr. S. R. Wigram, and published by him in his "Chronicles of Elstow." These Chronicles throw a good deal of light on the internal life of a nunnery, and also show that unfortunate events *will* occur in some families, even in a *religious* one, as we may suppose a community of Christian women to have been both in the technical and popular meaning of the word. Here, for instance, we have a letter written in 1270 by Richard Gravesend, Bishop of Lincoln—in which diocese Bedfordshire was situated until the year 1837—under the following circumstances. One of the nuns, Agatha Giffard, who was sister to Walter Giffard, Archbishop of York, and Godfrey Giffard, Bishop of Worcester, had given some cause of offence, we know not what, and her diocesan writes to her brother, the Archbishop of York, and while plainly acknowledging that something was wrong, diplomatically hints that though he must inflict punishment, he will at the same time keep the matter secret.

"We are anxious," he says, "from our

inmost heart concerning a misfortune which has occurred in the Abbey of Elvestowe, and grief of this kind affects us the more bitterly from our pious compassion, because that from that house, more frequently than from any other, false reports of disgraceful acts are brought to us. And although in this, by the persuasions of certain people, we were somewhat impressed against the Abbess and your sister, who through connivance or remissness were said to be in fault, yet since in consideration of yourself, and the venerable father, your brother, we are through affection specially jealous of the honour of your family, we will take care, so far as we can in accordance with the laws of God, and the usages of propriety, and without secular scandal, to correct the fault which has been committed, with all secrecy, and to visible sores to apply a hidden medicine. Wherefore, if it so please you, let not the occurrence of the aforementioned misfortune further greatly trouble your mind."

Certainly the worthy Bishop knew the spirit of the proverb about washing the family linen at home. The offence, whatever it was, did not

hinder Agatha Giffard from becoming Prioress a few years later.

Many years afterwards, in 1530, there was another enquiry into Elstow Abbey and the doings of its inmates, made by another Bishop of Lincoln, Longland. It appears that the discipline had become slack, and that the ladies of the Abbey had dropped much into secular ways and customs. They seem to have sought for society other than that of their companions, and did not shun the company of those who might come from the world outside. And as to their dress, they appear to have cut their garments according to the reigning fashions, and the stiff Benedictine robes and veils had given place to semi-secular costume, with open neck and red stomacher. The sisters had apparently forgotten the strict rules of this order. It could not be said of each one :

“ Black was her garb, her rigid rule
Reform'd on Benedictine School.”

Feminine vanity had penetrated into the cloister itself, and in consequence Bishop Longland addressed to the sisters the following

injunction or reprimand. The date of it is, we must remember, only a few years before the Dissolution.

“John Longland, by the sufferance of God Bishop of Lincoln, to our well-beloved sisters in charity the Abbess and Convent of Ulne-stowe of our diocese of Lincoln, sendeth greeting, grace, and our blessing, and forasmuch as in our ordinary visitation of late exercised within that monastery diverse things appeared and were detected worthy of reformation, we therefore, for the honour of God, and redress of the same, and maintenance of good religion there, send to you this injunction following, which we will and command you to keep under the pains ensuing.”

“First, forasmuch as the very order of Saint Benedict's rules are not thus observed in keeping the Fraternity”—that is, the common eating-room, the name being borrowed from a community of monks or *frères*—“at meal times, where the sisters should be as well fed spiritually with Holy Scripture as bodily with meat, but customably they resort to certain places within the monastery called the Households”



—that is, the parlour or apartment to which lay visitors would come, as distinguished from the Fraternity—“where much insolence”—or slackness—“is used contrary to the good rules of the said religion by reason of resort of seculars, both men, women, and children, and many other inconvenience have already ensued: in consideration thereof, and for that we will the said religion to prosper according unto the foundation of the house, and the rules of the same, we enjoin and strictly command under the pain of disobedience that the Lady Abbess and her successors see that no such households be there kept from henceforth, but only one place which shall be called the *Misericorde*, where shall be one sad”—that is, sober or staid—“Lady of the eldest sort, overseer and mistress to all the residue that thither shall resort, which in number shall not pass five at the uttermost, besides the said Lady overseer or mistress, and these five weekly to change, and so all the convent have kept the same, and they again to begin, and the said governor and overseer of them continually to continue in that room by the space of one quarter of a year,

and so quarterly to change at the nomination and pleasure of the Lady Abbess for the time being."

"Over this it is ordered under the said pain and injunction that the Lady Abbess have no more sisters from henceforth in her household but only four with her Chaplain, and likewise weekly to change till they have gone by course through the whole number of sisters, and so again to begin and continue."

"And we will and charge under like pains that all the said ladies, both of the Abbess and of the *Misericorde*, do observe and keep the choir at Matins, Mass, and all other Divine Service, as those that keep the cloisters, without there be any lawful impediment, and that no lady of the said two places remain longer in any of the same than half-past seven o'clock at night, and that no man, priest nor other, come into the said place called the *Misericorde* without special license of the Lady Abbess for the time being, and yet this, to make no long abode, neither there to be without honest testimony of his or their honest conversation, and this the Lady Abbess to see observed and kept

under the pain of contempt, and all the residue of the ladies daily to sit in the Fraternity, according unto their rules, at their meals."

"And forasmuch as the more secret religious persons be kept from the sight and usage of the world and strangers, the more close and entire their mind and devotion shall be unto God, we order and enjoin to the Lady Abbess that before the Nativity of our Lord next ensuing, she cause a door with two leaves to be made and set up at the lower end of the choir, and that door to be five feet in height at the least, and continually to stand shut at the times of Divine Service, except it be at coming in and out of any of the ladies or ministers of the said Church. And under the like pain as is aforesaid we charge the said Lady Abbess that she cause the door between the Convent and the Parish Church continually to be shut unless it be only at the times of Divine Service, and likewise she cause the cloister door towards the outward court to be continually shut, unless it be at such times as any necessities for the Convent shall be brought in or borne out at the same, and that she suffer no other back

doors to be opened but upon necessary great and urgent causes by her approval. Also we enjoin to the said Lady Abbess that such repairs as shall be necessary in and upon the buildings within the said monastery and other houses, tenements, and farms, thereunto belonging be sufficiently done and made within the space of one year immediately after the date of this injunction."

"Moreover, forasmuch as the Lady Abbess and Convent of that house be all one religious body, united by the rules and profession of holy Saint Benedict, and it is not convenient any religious to be dissevered or separate, we will and enjoin that from henceforth none of the said Abbess's servants nor no other secular person or persons, whatsoever he or they be, go in any procession before the said Abbess between her and her said Convent under pain of excommunication, and that the Lady Abbess nor any of her successors hereafter be led by the arm or otherwise in any procession there as in time passed hath been used, under the same pain."

"Also we will, command, and enjoin to Dame

Katharine Wyngate, the said Lady Abbess's Chaplain, under pain of contempt, that nightly she rise and be at Matins within the said morning with her other religious sisters there, and that from henceforth she do not sup nor breakfast in the buttery of the said Abbess, neither with the steward nor any other secular person or persons under the same pain, and likewise we enjoin to all them that hereafter shall be in the said office or rooms of the Lady Abbess's Chaplain, under the pain above expressed."

"Over this we ordain, and by way of injunction command under pain of disobedience, from henceforth that no lady nor any religious sister within the said monastery presume to wear their apparels upon their heads under such lay fashion as they have now of late done, with cornered crests, neither under such manner of height showing their foreheads, more like lay people than religious, but that they use them without such crests or secular fashions, and of a lower sort, and that their veil come as low as their eyelids, and so continually to use the same, unless it be at such

times as they shall be occupied in any handicraft-labour, at which times it shall be lawful for them to turn up the said veil for the time of such occupation."

"And under like pains we enjoin that none of the said religious sisters do use or wear hereafter any such voided shoes, neither crested, as they have of late been used, but that they be of such honest fashion as other religious places both use, and that their gowns and kirtles be close afore, and not deeply voided at the breast, and no more to use red stomachers, but the sadder colours in the same."

Yes, after a history of some hundreds of years the Abbess of Elnestowe had become a great secular lady with her little court, her chaplains for her maids of honour, and her stewards and other officials for her ministers, and in procession she loved to go as one whose movements were to be attended with all possible pomp and dignity; while the sisters, weary of the monotony of cloister life, loved to find their way to the *Misericorde*, and there —while they displayed their voided shoes,

their low-cut gowns, their crested veils, and their red stomachers, all too secular a garb—to learn the gossip of the outside world, which was brought to them by their visitors. Pope failed to exercise his usual judgment when he wrote:—

“How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!
The world forgetting, by the world forgot.”

Nothing now remains of the domestic buildings of the convent. *Fraternity* and *Misericorde* have disappeared, together with the lodgings where the Abbess held her court and the dormitory and cells of the sisters.

The church also has disappeared with the exception of the portion of the nave west of the screen referred to in the Bishop's injunctions. This portion was then, and is still, used as the parish church. The foundations of the nuns' choir, or chancel, may be traced beneath the sward. Towards the village we can find the Abbey fish-ponds. As to what took the place of the nunnery buildings later on we shall have to speak, when we consider an early stage in Christian's journey.

The last Abbess was Elizabeth Bayfield.

She came into office in 1530, the year in which Bishop Longland issued his injunctions of reformation. Nine years afterwards this Abbess surrendered her house to the King. The deed of surrender is curious reading. It shows under what names the forcible seizure is veiled. One paragraph we give. It is the opening one, or a portion of it:—

“Know ye that we, the aforesaid Abbess and Convent, with an unanimous assent and consent, with deliberate minds, of our certain knowledge and mere motion, from certain just and reasonable causes, specially moving us our minds and our consciences, have freely and willingly given and granted, and by these presents do give, grant, restore, deliver, and confirm, to our most illustrious and victorious Prince and Lord, Henry VIII., by the grace of God, King of England and France, Defender of the Faith, Lord of Ireland, and upon earth supreme Head, under Christ, of the Church of England, all our said monastery or Abbey of Elneſtowe aforesaid.”

The nuns were turned out of their house, but they received pensions. Elizabeth Bayfield,

as Abbess, received one of £50. The Prioress, whose name was Ellen Snow, received a pension of £4. A late Prioress, Anne Wake, received £3 6s. 8d. Cecilie Starkey, who is described as Sexton, probably some honorary office, had a similar pension, and the other nuns, twenty in number, received pensions of £2 13s. 4d., or of £2. Amongst the names are those of Maud Sheldon, the Sub-prioress, and Katharine Wyngate, the Chaplain to the Abbess. The latter lady is mentioned in Bishop Longland's injunction. She probably belonged to the family of Wyngate of Ampt-hill and Harlington, for Elstow, as we have already mentioned, was an abbey much frequented by ladies of county families.

Some of the sisters went to live in Bedford, and the burials of three are recorded in the register of the Church of St. Mary in that town.

We have dwelt at some length on the history of the Abbey for a special reason. In a country village traditions are easily handed down. The Abbey was dissolved in 1539. John Bunyan was born in 1628. Tales of "the ladies" must have been told in his hear-

ing. The grandparents of his generation could remember "the ladies" themselves. Is it not possible that something of what he had heard of the pious lives of these women vowed to religion—for we must not suppose that Bishops were continually issuing monitions—was in his mind when he described the virgins of the House Beautiful, *Discretion, Prudence, Piety, and Charity*?

To find the first scene in the progress of the pilgrim we must naturally go a little outside the village. We can hardly expect to discover a *Slough of Despond* in the street or on the green, and perhaps also it would hardly be civil to dwellers in Elstow to say that their peaceful houses represent the city of destruction.

But morasses, sloughs, bogs, marshes, were and are to be found in plenty enough, and within reasonable distance. The Ouse valley has always been subject to sudden and destructive floods at all seasons, and the older bridges have long causeways, supported on flood arches, which run across the meadows. Fuller speaks of an old saying which describes the river by

the name of "the Bailiff of Bedford," on account of the quantity of hay and of cattle *distrained* by it on the low-lying lands. When the water has subsided, the land on each side of the river remains for a long time soft and spongy, for the only drainage is by the ditches or dykes which divide meadow from meadow, and remain full to the brim until the main stream into which they run has been lowered in height; and John Bunyan probably found himself *overshoe* in a bog many a time when he wandered waterwards, as boys are wont to do, from his father's home. Anywhere, then, in the meadows between Elstow and the Ouse, or even on the borders of the brook which ran hard by his birthplace, we may locate the *Slough of Despond*.

Bunyan is not the only dweller in the Ouse valley who has remarked on the character of the low-lying land. Cowper, the poet, during his sojourn at Olney, found himself at times cut off from the society of Mrs. Jones and her sister, Lady Austen, by the floods and mire which separated his little town from the Rectory House at Clifton Reynes, and when

his own particular pilgrim's progress was thus interrupted, he wrote:—

“ Oh ! that I were a Dutchman,
That I need not repine at the mud,
But in a bog live well content,
And find it just my element.”

Whether it be Olney or Elstow, there is but little difference in the surroundings if we proceed riverwards.

A little further afield must we go to find the next difficulty in the Pilgrim's way. Worldly Wiseman directs him to a high hill whose “side of it that was next the wayside did hang so much over that Christian was afraid to venture further lest the hill should fall on his head,” and out of the side of which came “flashes of fire.” Now the description of the hill does not seem to tally with what we shall find as we climb the slopes which lead to the hills of Ampthill; it rather seems to point to a mound rising abrupt and solitary from a plain. Such a hill is to be found at Castle Mills, on the Ouse, about four miles below Bedford, where there is a cartway across the river, and where an evidently arti-

ficial mound rises steeply in the midst of the flat meadow-land. *Risinghoe* is the ancient name of this elevation, and that name well describes its situation. Leland says that it was once the castle keep of the family of Espec, but a mediæval castle could hardly have been built in such a place, nor is the mound sufficiently strong to support such a theory, or such a weight of masonry as would be necessary in a stronghold. It is most likely nothing more than a signal station from which fire flashes—there is tradition again for Bunyan to work on—were sent to other not far distant stations, such as that to the west on which the De Beauchamps of Bedford afterwards reared their castle, or that which commands the valley a couple of miles further to the east, and is called Howbury Camp.

These river-side earthworks abound in the valley of the Ouse, and probably date from the days when the river formed a tribal boundary, and the tribe which held it had a system by which they collected their fighting men together when their neighbours were inclined to be nasty.

The dreamer, in his allegory, has likened



Risinghoe Castle. (Mount Sinai.)

the British signal mound to "Mount Sinai in Arabia," but in his usual way he has selected

some feature in his well-known Bedfordshire, and has then allowed his imagination to adapt it or magnify it until it is fitted to take its place in his story.

Taking things in order, we must next seek for the wicket-gate. To do so we must return to Elstow Church. We have already mentioned that the portion which we now see is the nave, or a portion of the nave, of the monastic church of Judith's convent. Nothing is now to be found but the four bays of this nave, which are of Transition-Norman and Early English work, with the adjacent side aisles of later date. Chancel and central tower, if ever there was one, have disappeared. But Elstow Church, though it be but a fragment, is an imposing building, towering far above the houses of the village, and when in its complete form it must have been one of the most magnificent examples of ecclesiastical architecture in the country, worthy of comparison with the Priory Church at Dunstable.

A plain but lofty wall cuts off the eastern end. It was against this wall that there stood those particular persons and things which

Bunyan tells us he "adored with great devotion—high-place, priest, clerk, vestment service, and what else, belonging to the church." He writes as though the church had, in his day at least, an altar beneath a baldachino. But this was hardly the case. That eastern wall had probably just then been *adorned*, as we see it now, with the effigy of Sir Humphrey Ratcliffe, which looks down on us in so incongruous and strange a fashion.

The west end of the church is, however, as interesting as the present east side is offensive. It has a double portal, and in the northernmost leaf of this portal is a small gate which is contained within, and forms part of, the larger door. Here we have, as many suppose, the idea of the wicket gate through which Christian fled for refuge when Evangelist had brought him back from beneath the burning mountain.

And there is another reason for supposing that this may be the case, for a tower stands close by which may be said to represent the Castle of Beelzebub from which arrows were wont to be shot, as Bunyan tells us, at the pilgrims

who were entering the gate. This tower stands detached, and at a distance of about twelve feet from the north aisle. The building was not always a tower, and the upper portion is of comparatively recent erection. The lower portion formed, it is supposed, some part of the domestic buildings of the convent, and the upper portion was built soon after the dissolution for the purpose of containing the parish bells. It is a building interesting, of course, to all students of Bunyan's life as the scene of his bell-ringing in his earlier days. He has a good deal to say about this tower. For some reason he appears at a later period to have regarded bell-ringing as an unholy proceeding, and looked longingly at the ropes without venturing to enter in beneath the handsome decorated doorway. And yet he did not learn to hate bells, for they ring out to his pilgrims as joy bells from the Celestial City in the closing scene of all.

But to return to surrounding scenes, as illustrating Bunyan's imagery. It may easily be seen that a bowman standing on the summit of the tower could command the approach to



Elstow Church Tower and North-East Portal, the Wicket Gate,
and the Tower of Beelzebub.



the wicket-gate. Gate and castle are thus supplied side by side, and the imagery is complete.

And if we go round to the other side of the church, we find another building which, perhaps, supplied an illustration for Bunyan. In a very unusual place, at the south-west end of the south aisle, stands the chapter-house of the nuns. It forms, with the lower part of the tower which we have just described, the only existing remains of the convent other than those of the church itself.

Learned men have disputed as to whether the building was indeed the gathering place of the nuns, commonly called the chapter-house. But such a building we may safely conjecture it to have been from its size, its shape, and its appearance. Its roof is supported, as are the majority of those which covered chapter-houses, by a central pillar.

Probably the tradition of this having been the meeting-place of the nuns had been handed down to Bunyan's time, and if Discretion, Piety, Patience, and Charity may in any way represent the Ladies of the Order of St. Bene-

dict, the "closet" or dining-room, or other apartment in which these damsels entertained the pilgrims, may have been suggested by the chapter-house.

The next stage in Christian's journey is the house of the Interpreter. There is nothing about this house which makes us think that Bunyan had any particular dwelling in his mind when he described it. Any building which contained enough rooms in which to exhibit the various acted parables, of the figure of the "very grave person with his eyes lifted up to Heaven, and the best of books in his hand,"—considered a portrait of Bunyan himself, though painted all unconsciously:—of the dusty floor; of the children named "Passion" and "Patience;" of the oil-fed fire; of the man in the iron cage; and of the man waking up from his awful dream of the Day of Judgment, would suffice his purpose. His own modest dwelling by the road-side at Elstow, would be too small for his stage; but in any one of the large old-fashioned roomy farm-houses, of which there are many in this neighbourhood, he might present the scenes which

formed the subjects of the Interpreter's homilies.

But there is one of the scenes which may, we think, be distinctly localised. It is that where Interpreter, taking Christian by the hand, leads him "into a pleasant place, where was built a *stately palace*, beautiful to behold, at the sight of which Christian was greatly delighted. He saw also upon the top thereof certain persons walking who were clothed with gold." In at the door of this palace Christian saw an armed man cut his way through the midst of the guards who kept it.

There is just such a palace, or rather a fragment of it, in Elstow at the present day. To describe its history we must go back to that of the Abbey. After the dissolution the possessions of the nunnery, or some of them, passed to Sir Humphrey Ratcliffe, whose effigy we have seen occupying a very conspicuous position in the centre of the present east wall of the church. The estates, however, very soon passed from the family of Ratcliffe to that of Hillersden, and the latter family built themselves a handsome Jacobean mansion close up

against the church on the south side, adjoining the chapter house, and occupying a portion of the site of the monastic buildings of the Abbey.

Nothing but the front remains now, but even in its ruin it is stately. The porch, which is somewhat later in date than the rest of the building, is particularly handsome, flanked as it is by pilasters, and surmounted by a pediment and armorial coats. There is every probability indeed that it was the design of Inigo Jones, of whose connection with Bedfordshire we shall say more when we arrive at Houghton House. Here we may suppose Bunyan saw, in his imagination, the opposing guards and the well-armed Christian soldier marching on with drawn sword.

The next stage in the journey of the Pilgrim is his arrival at the cross. No one can hesitate for a moment as to where the cross at which Christian lost his burden stood, or, as we may be thankful to say after so many years of destruction and neglect, still stands in part. Village and churchyard crosses are common enough. The actual reason for which they



Elstow Place. (The Palace in the vision of the Interpreter.)



were at first erected is perhaps not altogether obvious, but their use as marking a central gathering place is sufficiently well known.

Sermons were preached, and ecclesiastical decrees were published, at the church crosses. St. Paul's Cross was the scene of many such a promulgation, important enough in its day. The market cross still stands in many an ancient town and city. All remember how—

“Dun-Edin Cross a pillar'd stone,
Rose in a turret octagon ;
But now is razed that monument,
Whence royal edict rang.”

But from a cross raised on a village green in Bedfordshire there was no such dread summons to be issued as that to which “the spectre crowd” listened on the eve of Flodden Field. The villagers gathered round, it may be, to listen to some comparatively unimportant official information, but more often to gossip, and to discuss such news as might reach Elstow. It was the gathering place, too, for those who, like Bunyan himself, came here on a Sunday afternoon to play tip-cat. Take his own words referring to his own feelings when he was so

engaged on the green : “ A voice did suddenly dart from heaven into my soul, which said, ‘ Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell ? ’ At this I was put to an exceeding maze. Whereupon, leaving my cat upon the ground, I looked up to heaven, and was as if I had, with the eyes of my understanding, seen the Lord Jesus looking down upon me, as being very hotly displeased with me.”

Had he not that Sunday afternoon on the green in his thoughts when he wrote of his Pilgrim—“ He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in a bottom, a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.”

There is no “ ascending ” place on Elstow Green, which lies flat enough, nor is there anything which could in any way be described as a sepulchre anywhere about ; but Bunyan

had naturally to expand what he saw, and as for the cross itself, probably it stood much more conspicuously in his day than it does now. We see merely a stump. Bunyan may have seen a cross complete with arms.

As for the way fenced with the wall called "Salvation," there are plenty of little alleys bounded by houses which run from the road on to the green, for Elstow Green does not exactly border the road, as do such spaces elsewhere. It is shut in to itself.

And thus have we seen the Pilgrim fairly started on his way ere his creator has left his native village.

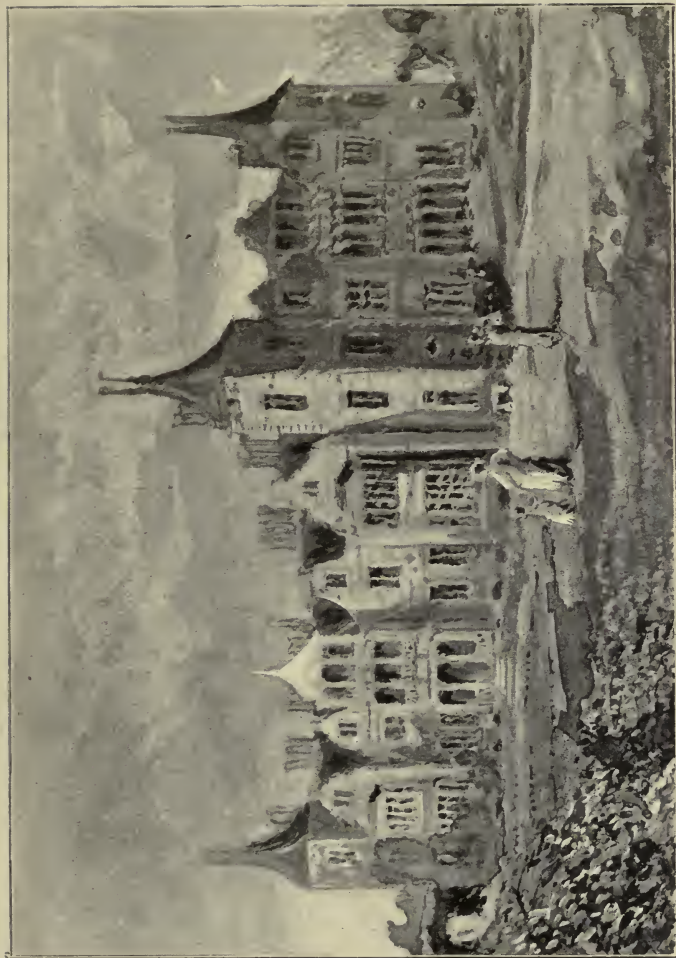
CHAPTER III.

THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL.

The Spring at the foot of the Hill—The Hill-side—History of Dame Ellen's Bury—Dame Eleanor St. Amand—Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke—The building of Houghton House—Inigo Jones—Description of the House—Christiana Bruce, Countess of Devonshire—Dr. George Lawson and the Restoration—Robert Bruce, Earl of Ailesbury—The Houghton House of Bunyan's Time—The Porter's Lodge—The Library—The Museum—The Armoury—The View of the Chilterns.

THE next stage of Christian's journey brings us to a portion of the county a few miles south of Elstow, and a part probably well-known to Bunyan, the neighbourhood of the little town of Ampthill.

It is a pretty walk, as pretty as any that may be found in Bedfordshire, from Elstow to Ampthill so soon as the first three or four miles are past. For although the first part is dull and flat, yet the latter part winds up the Ampthill hill between two grand old parks,



Houghton House (The House Beautiful).
Restored from old drawings and the existing remains.



which extend far over the sides of the hill, and contain magnificent trees.

But before we begin to ascend the hill, we must note the first natural feature which Bunyan brings before us after Christian has passed the cross. "I beheld then," he says, "that they all went on till they came to the foot of the hill Difficulty, at the bottom of which was a spring."

There is a spring plain enough, not a great fountain, it is true, pouring out volumes of water—we must go farther on into the chalk country to find such strong streams—but a nice little trickling thread of water, which runs down the wooded bank on the left-hand side of the road, just before we begin to mount the hill. We should, perhaps, not notice it were it not that the flat clay-land through which we have been journeying affords no such sight, and the tiny rill is a sign to us that we are approaching a country where we shall find water in another form than in that of muddy brooks.

Bunyan tells us that he saw in his dream two other roads which ran up the hill, but that



Christian chose the narrow path, which seemed to lead up with a very steep ascent. There are certainly not two roads now. There is but one, the high road, which runs up between the two parks, and we are not concerned with this one as we follow the steps of the Pilgrim. We rather try to imagine what he would have met with if he turned, as he did, out of the high-road into a steep and winding path on the left-hand or eastern side of the road. That such a path existed in the days of Bunyan is probable enough, but it led to something which has now ceased to exist. What was this?

The main road, as we have said, passes between two parks. That to the right, or western side, is Ampthill Park, in which stood most likely in Bunyan's time the scanty remains of Ampthill Castle which had been built by Lord Fanhope in the early part of the fifteenth century. The whole of this building, rendered historical since Queen Katharine of Aragon here received the Commissioners who came to announce to her the sentence of divorce pronounced by Archbishop Cranmer, has long since disappeared. The flat terrace on which

it stood, and from which doubtless Bunyan often gazed on the fair park below, is now adorned by a Gothic cross, on which is the following inscription by Horace Walpole of the "Letters :"

" In days of old, here Ampthill's towers were seen,
The mournful refuge of an injured Queen.
Here flowed her pure and unavailing tears,
Here blinded zeal sustained her sinking years.
Yet freedom hence her radiant banner wav'd,
And love avenged a realm by priests enslaved.
From Katharine's wrongs a nation's bliss was spread,
And Luther's light from Henry's lawless bed."

But these Protestant sentiments of Walpole's are of a good many years' later date than the time of Bunyan, and we do not suggest that the latter chose any of his imagery from Ampt-hill Castle or its ruins. Let us pass into the park on the other side of the road. This park, which like that of Ampthill runs down the northern slope of the hills, was once called Dame Ellen's Bury. It is in the parish of Houghton Conquest, so called from the family of Conquest, who were here from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century; but the manor to which this park was attached did not belong to that family. It belonged to the family of

St. Amand, who were a conspicuous family hereabouts, and whose castle at Cainhoe we shall visit later on ; and in 1415 Dame Eleanor St. Amand, who seems to have been a lady who stoutly stood up for the rights of her family, gave her name to the park or bury.

The manor appears to have become a royal one, and in 1605 or thereabout James I. made Sir Edmund Conquest keeper of the park, and paid him a visit of some days at his house at Houghton Conquest. Thomas Archer, the then Rector of Houghton, has left us some account of this visit in a volume of notes which he has left for the benefit of his successors in the Rectory. But up to this date, so far as we know, there was no other mansion in the parish to rival that of the Conquests.

In the year 1615, however, there was a change in the history of Dame Ellen's Bury. Just sixty years before there had been born at Penshurst, in Kent, to Sir Henry Sidney and his wife Mary, the daughter of John Dudley, Earl of Northumberland, a daughter, who was christened by her mother's name. This child grew up to become one of the most famous

women of the day, and with her name we always couple most closely that of her brother, Sir Philip Sidney. Everyone knows those memorial lines by "Rare Ben Jonson"—

" Underneath this sable hearse
Lies the subject of all verse—
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother.
Death, ere thou hast slain another,
Fam'd and fair and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee."

Sir Henry Sidney was Lord President of Wales, and occupied the official residence for such high officers in that magnificent border fortress, the castle at Ludlow. There on the banks of the Teme did Mary Sidney spend her childhood. At the age of twenty she was introduced to the Court of Elizabeth, and two years after she married, as his third wife, Henry Herbert, second Earl of Pembroke.

Then there followed a time of earnest study and literary work, when the youthful Countess and her well-loved brother Philip read and worked together at her new home, Wilton House, the seat of the Pembrokes. An account of what the brother and sister did together

belongs rather to the literary history of our country. The work was cut short by the tragic fate of Sir Philip Sidney at the siege of Zutphen in 1587. A gloom passed over the life of Countess Mary on the death of this companion of her youth, but she still continued to take the keenest interest in literature, and was the patroness of Spenser and many other writers of the day.

In the year 1615 Lady Pembroke, now a widow, was presented by James I. with the royal manor of Dame Ellen's Bury; and, notwithstanding the fact that she was well past middle age, the energetic lady at once began to build in the lovely park; and the result was the Houghton House of which the magnificent remains are to the present day a conspicuous example of what our ancestors could do in the way of architectural creation.

So quickly was the work completed, that in 1621 Lady Pembroke was able to entertain her Sovereign in her new house. Gardens were also laid out on the slope of the hill by the Countess; and tradition will have it that under a tree in the park Sir Philip Sidney composed

his "Arcadia." But tradition is wrong, for, as we have seen, Sir Philip was dead some years before his sister acquired Houghton. Another tradition with more probability places the historic tree in the park at Wilton.

Lady Pembroke died soon after the royal visit, but her work remains, as we have said, in part, and is worthy of some description. Quite sufficient is standing to allow the careful student of architecture to complete the building in imagination.

Inigo Jones is commonly supposed to have been the architect employed in its erection. This seems probable enough, for the young Earl of Pembroke, Countess Mary's son, was certainly a patron of this well-known architect, and employed him in the erection of a portion of Wilton House. Experts, moreover, tell us that the mansion bears many distinguishing marks of the style of Jones. The style is, of course, classical, but yet the building is classical more in its details than in its general features and arrangements. Some compare a portion of Houghton House to the work of Palladio in the convent *della Carita* at Venice. Inigo

Jones, it will be remembered, was numbered among the pupils of Palladio.

Houghton must be an early example of a house built square and solid without an open space in the centre. It was a long time before this plan of building became prevalent. It is, moreover, remarkable as having three fronts, all of them different and all equally attractive in design. They are to the north, west, and south respectively. The east side was evidently taken up by offices.

The north and south sides are the longest, being one hundred and twenty-two feet in length. The east and west sides are but seventy-six. At the corners are towers, and these towers had, we know from descriptions, spire roofs. They were about sixty-five feet high.

The south front, the one which looks towards Ampthill, has a tower in the centre, through which is the principal entrance. The upper portion had Ionic pilasters, and at the top was a balustrade with crowns. A considerable portion of the tower is still standing. Between it and the corner towers are two large bay-windows.

The west front, though the shortest, is the most interesting. In the centre, raised on a



Houghton House.

flight of four steps, is a Doric portico. Above this is a frieze which is well worth attention, for it is adorned with monograms and cyphers,

between which are the bearings of the families with which Countess Mary was connected. We can see, still happily in good preservation, the lion rampant of the Herberts, the bear and ragged staff of the Dudleys; the pheon (in this case with a crown over it) of the De L'Isles, and the porcupine of the Sidneys. Certainly the old lady was proud of her family tree. Above this frieze was an Ionic loggia with balustrade, and above this a smaller gallery with four columns only, which were of the Corinthian order. The upper portion of this very handsome centre is, unfortunately, much destroyed. The whole was crowned by a pediment.

The north front has also an imposing centre, but the upper part of it is, however, in ruins. The ground has sloped away slightly along the west side, so that there are six steps instead of four. Between four Doric columns are three arches, and the frieze above these is ornamented with heraldic bearings similar to those on the west side. Above was another loggia with Ionic pillars. The upper portion lacked the beauty of the centre of the west front.



Houghton House. The South Entrance.

It consisted of a large window between two Ionic pilasters, and on each side of it is a blank window. The upper part of each window was worked with a well-carved scallop shell. Above this was a large space with a coat of arms, and the whole was finished with a pediment and spire-shaped pinnacles. Such is the length of this side of the house that it has three rows of windows of four lights each, and two pairs of these are bay windows of a large size. The tracery of some of the windows is curious, the mullions being of an oval shape in the upper portion. There is a basement to this part of the house.

The building is now roofless, and it is rather difficult to make out the many rooms. There is no woodwork whatever remaining, the whole having been removed when the house was dismantled in 1794.

A few years after the death of Countess Mary the mansion at Houghton came into the possession of the Bruce family. At this time there was another lady living here, who, though not perhaps quite so well known as Lady Pembroke, was of considerable note

during the civil wars. This lady was Christiana, daughter of Lord Edward Bruce of Kinloss, and the heroic wife of William Earl of Devonshire. Lady Devonshire was one of the foremost of the royalist ladies to rally her party when discomfited, but after the crowning defeat of Worcester she retired, perhaps almost disheartened, to Houghton House, then the property of her brother the Earl of Elgin, and there spent three years of patient waiting.

But she was not altogether unoccupied, for she had at hand certain friends of the King. One of them was Dr. George Lawson, the ejected Rector of Mears Ashby in Northamptonshire, who when driven from his benefice became a schoolmaster at Houghton Conquest. A tablet in the church at Millbrook, about two miles to the west, gives some account of Dr. Lawson and the share which he had in bringing about the Restoration; and doubtless he and the Countess of Devonshire had many an interview on the subject which then stood first and foremost with the Cavaliers of the day.

It is just possible that Lady Devonshire may

have known Houghton in earlier days, for an intimate friendship existed between herself and the Earl of Pembroke, and the latter addressed to her many verses in the fashion of the romantic gallantry of the times.

Lady Devonshire lived for some years after the Restoration, and died in 1674. But though her residence in Bedfordshire had come to an end a long time before, her family still continued to live at Houghton.

Of this family a distinguished member was her nephew Robert Bruce, son of the Earl of Elgin. He was intimately connected with the political movements of the county, for in 1660 he was sent as one of the members for Bedfordshire to the Convention Parliament, and in the same year he was appointed Lord-Lieutenant. He had at first a partner in this work, for the Earl of Cleveland shared the office with him, but in 1667 the latter died, and Robert Bruce reigned alone. He had already risen to higher honours, for in 1668 he had been created Viscount Bruce of Amptill and first Earl of Ailesbury.

Nor was this Robert Bruce of the seventeenth



century a politician and man of action only. He has left behind him the reputation of one who was fond of literature and antiquities. He died at Houghton in 1685, and lies buried in Ampthill Church.

At the time when John Bunyan was writing "The Pilgrim's Progress," Lord Ailesbury was in full power and an important personage in the neighbourhood. He had much to do with the borough of Bedford, and a few years later, in 1684, he was concerned in the granting of a new charter to the Corporation.

But now let us return to the bottom of the hill where we left the Pilgrim, refreshed as he was with his draught from the flowing spring. He turns to the left hand, or eastern, side of the road, and begins to climb the Hill Difficulty. As is to be expected, Bunyan has somewhat exaggerated the steepness of the hill, and forces Christian to climb it in places on his hands and knees. This northern slope of Houghton Park was, we may suppose, in Bunyan's time a series of terraces rising one above another, and laid out in the stiff garden-fashion of the time. A flight of steps, or maybe

a steep path, would lead from one terrace to the next, and gradually the view over the plain of Bedford would reveal itself to the traveller as he mounted higher and higher.

And there would be another feature in this terraced garden. There would be little summer-houses or *arbours*, as Bunyan has it, placed here and there, each with its *settle*. It was in such an *arbour* and beneath such a *settle* that Christian lost his roll, which fell from his hand as he slept. Just slight indications of these terraces and garden walks can we make out, though the park is now grazed up to the ruins themselves.

But it is with the mansion itself that we are the rather occupied. It stands in one of the most beautiful spots in Bedfordshire, and is in itself one of the most beautiful domestic buildings in the county, for unfortunately this little shire does not abound in Elizabethan or Jacobean mansions. It is ivy-clothed, and trees have been allowed to grow up within the ruins themselves; but still we can make out some of the distinguishing features of the three fronts which we have already described.

“ Oh, a dainty plant is the ivy green,
That creepeth o'er ruins old !
Of right choice food are his meals, I ween,
In his cell so lone and cold.
Creeping where no life is seen,
A rare old plant is the ivy green.”

But friend ivy is rather a troublesome and pushing friend when he covers up all or the greater part of what the architectural student would love to decipher.

Some, it is true, would make the Hillersden mansion, hard by the church at Elstow, the “Beautiful House”; but though we have allowed for that mansion the honour of being the stately palace of the Interpreter's visions, we must claim the higher honour for Houghton House, standing as it does on the summit of the Hill Difficulty and commanding views over a wide expanse of country. Moreover, when Bunyan walked along the garden terraces, or perchance entered the mansion itself, it was in all its grandeur, and the Lord-Lieutenant of the county was here keeping high state and court.

It will be remembered that Christian, when he had reached the top of the hill and had

made his way towards the house, was at first somewhat disturbed by the sight of lions, who guarded each side of a narrow way. This narrow passage was as much a creation of Bunyan's as the animals themselves ; but the Pilgrim, if he had gone round the house and were approaching it from the north, would pass along an avenue, at the end of which he would see the central tower with the main entrance straight before him ; and the porter at the same time would be able to see the man approaching, and could shout to him not to fear the chained beasts.

All that follows is in exact accordance probably with what went on at a great man's house when a stranger arrived. The porter, having parleyed for a time with him, goes into his lodge and rings a great clanging bell ; and then the traveller is ushered into the house by the "grave and beautiful damsel named Discretion."

All arrangements within testify to what was probably the custom at Houghton House when Lord Ailesbury was its master. The Pilgrim was offered a drink while he waited for supper.

That was in accordance presumably with the somewhat exuberant hospitality of the period. We can make out whereabouts was once the "large upper chamber, whose window opened towards the sun-rising: the name of the chamber was peace." The wall has been broken away on this, the eastern side of the house, but there is a delightful view from its site, across a dip in the hill and on to the wood beyond.

And then on the morning after his arrival Christian was taken into the study, where he was shown "records of the greatest antiquity." The Earl of Ailesbury was, we know, a man fond both of books and antiquarian pursuits, and doubtless he had a well-filled library, into which Bunyan may at some time have been allowed to enter, or of which he may have heard. And may we not say also that the arms of the Dudleys and Sidneys and De L'Isles and Herberts, which Lady Pembroke had caused to be carved on the western and northern fronts, reminded him that noble families had their pedigrees, which he took as his figure for "the pedigree of the Lord of the hill, the Son of the Ancient of days"?

Doubtless also there was hanging in the hall at Houghton House a collection of armour, much of which had done service during the civil wars. Here, then, would Bunyan find his imagery for the sword and the shield and the breastplate with which Christian was armed by the fair damsels Charity, Prudence, and Piety.

Most likely, moreover, Lord Ailesbury had, as an antiquarian, made a collection of some sort for what we should now call a museum. When the sisters showed the Pilgrim antiquities of the Old Testament, from the rod of Moses to the sling and stones of David, was there not some remembrance in Bunyan's mind of what he had seen or had heard of at Houghton?

One lovely summer evening, when the moon was at the full, we started for a late stroll round the ruins. As we approached we heard the sound of voices and peals of light girlish laughter proceeding from the interior of the building. What said we to ourselves, can it be that the ghosts of Sidneys or Herberts return at times to visit their former abode? But they must be in all certainty a merry throng.

Surely the stately Countess of Pembroke cannot be amongst them, and Lady Devonshire must have remembrances of the place which are too sad to allow her to return here with laughter and with song? It must be the Restoration revels which went on when the Bruces reigned, which are being repeated for our benefit. But stay; what is this mass of gleaming steel on which the moon-beams shine? Has a phantom array of weapons been turned out from the ancient armoury to sparkle in the moonshine?

But as we approached, the piled-up heap of flashing steel resolved itself into a harmless stack of bicycles; so, having satisfied ourselves that we had to deal with the nineteenth century and not with the seventeenth, we ventured to pass within the ruins, and penetrated to a large inner room, which appeared to be illuminated by glow-worms of gigantic size clinging to the crevice in the walls. These lights were those of the bicycle lamps which had been fixed up all round the apartment, and threw a light on the scene beneath. Round a large white table-cloth which had taken the

place of a floor on which once gallants and dames of the time of the second Charles trod coranto or minuet, was a large and merry party engaged on what proved to be nearly a midnight supper. We found that host and hostess were of our acquaintance, and we were pressed to sit down to this banquet which was being served in the ancient hall of Houghton House.

The meal finished, the young people, such is the overwhelming energy of youth, declared that they must start some games amongst the ruins, notwithstanding the fact that many of them had many a mile of road to ride ere they could reach their homes. Hide-and-seek was the game proposed and carried, and in a minute the flock had dispersed to all parts of the building, and every apartment, passage, and corridor was quickly occupied. Then began the search, and the white dresses of the girls flashed across the dark passages, and, from time to time, some damsel, hard pressed, fled out into the moonlight with a little pretended scream of fear of capture. We elders sat and stood apart, as young men and maidens hurried

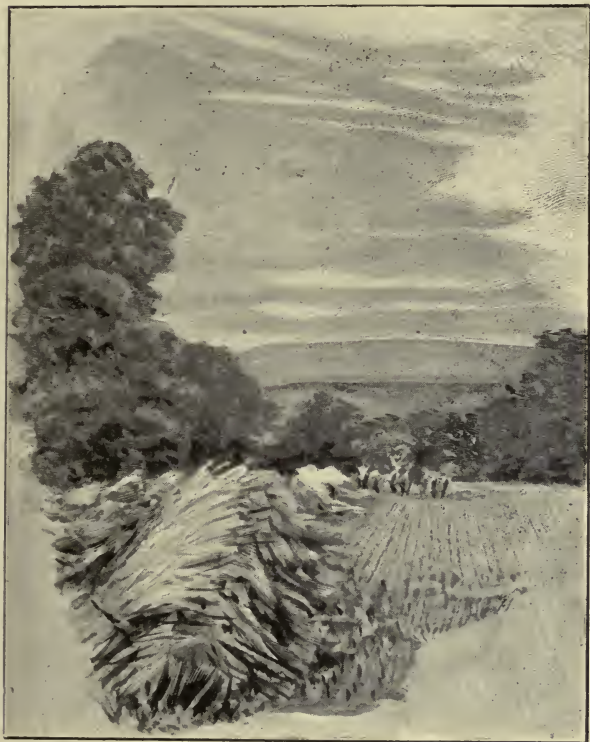
around us, losing themselves in the labyrinthine mesh of passages, or secreting themselves beneath the dense masses of overhanging ivy.

It was an amusing and a pretty scene which was being played before us, and one, moreover, which fitted in not incongruously with the building itself, which had known its times of merriment as well as those of sorrow. Nor was it, one may say, inconsistent with the spirit of Bunyan's drama that such innocent pleasure should lighten up the old walls within which he had caused his pilgrims to find rest and refreshment on their way towards the Heavenly city.

And then on the second day Christian was taken up to the top of the house that he might — "if the day were clear" — view the *Delectable Mountains* far away to the "south." There can be no doubt, we think, as to the view which Bunyan had in mind as he wrote, a view which may be had any day, though we can no longer climb to the summit of Houghton House, if we gaze from the ridge on which it stands.

For just where the parks of Houghton and Ampthill adjoin, at the northern outskirts of the

town of Ampthill, the ridge of the hill is narrow,



The Chiltern Hills from Houghton Ridge.

(The Delectable Mountains from House Beautiful.)

and you have no sooner ascended from the vale of Bedford than you begin to descend again at

once. And from this ridge, more especially directly in a line with Houghton House, on the eastern side of the town, there is a glorious view as we look due south. In the foreground we have the gardens and orchards of Ampthill, and beyond these the woods of Flitton and Silsoe, and still farther, and blocking off all view beyond, the line of the far-stretching Chiltern Hills. When the sun is due south, if we take our stand above Ampthill at mid-day, we see these great lazy chalk giants sleeping, as it were, in the haze of the sunshine, all their whiteness turned to purple.

“ 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
And robes the mountain in its azure hue.”

One of the main roads to London from Bedford, and the one, moreover, which passes through Elstow, crosses the hills only a little more than a mile east of Houghton House, and Bunyan, in his frequent journeys to London, no doubt often passed along this road. All in this direction was, therefore, to him familiar ground. Many a pleasant walk or ride came back to him through memory, as he took pen

in hand to describe Hill Difficulty with its steep path and its arbour, and the House Beautiful with its guest-chamber, its large upper room looking eastward, its study, and its armoury.

Many a time did Bunyan, as he journeyed, look southwards to the blue Chilterns, and when the time came he placed together all that he had seen, as the frame in which he should set his wayfaring pilgrim.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO VALLEYS, VANITY FAIR, AND THE SILVER MINE.

The Valley of Humiliation—The Millbrook Gorge—The Church and Village—Dr. George Lawson—Insecure Road and Marshy Ground—The Giants' Caves in the Sandstone—Fairs, Revels, and Feasts—The Village "Cage"—The Herne Chapel at Bedford—The Gold Mine at Pulloxhill—Wayside Crosses.

WE do not presume to say that John Bunyan describes the journey of his Pilgrim as if he passed through the various scenes in one single walk or ride a few miles south of Elstow. All that we maintain is that most of the scenes are to be found in this district, and within a comparatively small space.

Christian goes down the hill from the House Beautiful accompanied by Discretion, Piety, Charity, and Prudence, and these damsels having counselled him to proceed with prudence, left him in the valley of Humiliation.



Millbrook Church.

We may place this valley anywhere in the hill country which we have now reached. There are dozens of valleys running down from the hills either to the north or to the south which would form the scene for the conflict of Christian with Apollyon. Bunyan gives no description of the spot where the two met. He is simply occupied with his marvellous account of the fight itself. We may pass on to the second valley, that of "the Shadow of Death," which is more particularly described.

Now, where are we going to find it? Is there any such valley in the neighbourhood of Ampthill, and one which Bunyan might frequently have passed through? We think there is. Let us hope that it will not shock anyone if we locate the Valley of the Shadow of Death in the pretty gorge in which stands the village of Millbrook. It is certainly now a pretty place. In the centre stands the pleasantly-situated Rectory house, with its terraced lawns. High up above the village, on a spur of the hills, stands the beautiful church where, as we have already mentioned, is to be found a monument to Dr. George

Lawson; and where are to be seen, moreover, the busts of Lord and Lady Holland of Ampt-hill House, the mansion which now stands beneath the site of Fanhope's Castle. Bordering the road are the few cottages which compose the little village, and the school peeps pleasantly out from amongst the trees. What, then, can there be in this place which recalls in any way the description of the terrible valley through which the Pilgrim had to pass?

Let us look at the picture as drawn by Bunyan, and then let us examine the natural characteristics of Millbrook a little more closely.

The valley as described by Bunyan had, on one side, a "very deep ditch," and on the other a "dangerous quag into which, if even a good man should fall, he finds no bottom to stand on." The valley is also said to be as "dark as pitch." Well, certainly the gorge of Millbrook is at times gloomy. It runs steeply down to the north, consequently the winter sun is soon hidden from it behind the hills, and the western side rises steeply, and is clad with

“ Fir trees dark and high,
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky.”



The Millbrook Gorge.

The road is not, in literal truth, bordered by a ditch and a quagmire on each side respec-



tively, but it does occupy a somewhat perilous position above the deep morass which forms the bottom of the valley. At the present day a timely notice by the County Council gives warning that they, the Council, will not be answerable for any damage which may arise should a heavy vehicle approach too near the outward boundary of the road. If such is the case in these days of scientific road-making, and there is a danger of the road slipping away and carrying with it heavily-laden wagon or traction-engine, what must have been the condition of the rough track which wound through the village in the days when John Bunyan may have journeyed up and down the valley?

The ground at the bottom is damp and marshy enough to have given Bunyan the idea of a "quag." It is dammed up in places into ponds, and the powerful spring which supplies the "brook" which once turned "a mill," at times causes the former to run at its own sweet will over the mossy grass and amongst the saplings which grow along its banks. One needs to pick one's way carefully along the bottom.

We hope that we have given no offence to Millbrook people by suggesting that Bunyan, walking through this valley some damp winter evening, carried away a bad impression of the place; nor would we for a moment suggest that there is anything in it which could in any way answer to his description of the "mouth of hell," whence "ever and anon the flame and smoke would come out in such abundance with sparks and hideous noises," unless it should be the village smithy, if there were one, where

"The children coming home from school
Look in at the open door:
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And watch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from the threshing-floor."

Nor need we suppose that any part of the Millbrook Gorge is set with "snares, traps, gins, and nets," nor full of "pits, pit-falls, deep holes, and shelvings." We have selected Millbrook as being possibly the place which Bunyan had in his mind when he described his valley, because it differs from the others near it in such a way as to fall in more readily with his description.

It will be remembered that at the end of the valley the Pilgrim found the cave where dwelt the "two giants, Pope and Pagan." There are, we believe, no caves actually in the valley, but they abound in the sandstone all around, and Bunyan could easily locate one where he wished to find it.

The next place at which the Pilgrim arrives is the town of Vanity. It seems almost as unkind to locate this town as to locate the valley of the Shadow of Death, but still we think we may do so in Elstow itself, as we hinted when we were describing Bunyan's native place.

The name of the town of Vanity is connected with its fair only, and when we speak of Elstow as being its scene, we only mean that, though there were fairs many all around, the particular fair which Bunyan had perhaps seen as a child would be the one to make the strongest and most lasting impression.

Fairs in the old days were something more than pleasure gatherings. The name is said to be derived, it is true, from the word *Feria*,

a Festival, but it appears that the name was so given simply because some feast-day of the



View from above the Millbrook Gorge.

Church gave the date for the event, according to a very common custom. In time Fairs were

certainly considered only as *Revels* or *Feasts*, as they are still called in some parishes, but, though the festive character was not absent in earlier times, it was a matter of "business first and pleasure afterwards."

Bunyan appears to have described the customs and practices of such fairs. There was "a great one" appointed by those who had the right to hold the fair, and to whom in boroughs even the mayor was subject. The fair brought in a considerable revenue to the holders of the right in the shape of tolls, and an Abbey, such as that of Elstow, when thus endowed, clung to its privileges which could only be granted by the Crown. How long after the dissolution of the Abbey the fair continued to exist we cannot say.

Bunyan speaks of the fair being divided into certain rows according to the nationalities represented. This is a clever device of his by which he describes Vanity Fair as existing all over the world; but he is quite right in saying that the fair consisted of various divisions. They were formed however, according to the commodities sold, each trade occupying a sepa-

rate position. The same system is carried out in the bazaars of Eastern cities at the present day.



The Cage, Wootton.

The pilgrims when first arrested are placed in the "cage." There may have been such a

cage on Elstow Green in Bunyan's time, but there is not one now. A very good specimen of a village cage is to be seen, however, at Wootton, a village about three miles distant. The cage was under the control of the village constable, but such an official is now seldom appointed. The resident member of the county constabulary, if there is one, performs the duties of the former, and carries away his prisoners, if he has any, to the police station of his district.

Bunyan does not describe to us the court-house in which the trial of the pilgrims took place. He gives us in full the names of the judge, of the jury, and of the witnesses, but never a word to make known to us in what place he lays his scene. His own experience some fourteen years before had made him acquainted with the Herne chapel at Bedford, where, in January, 1661, he was brought before the county magistrates at quarter sessions. It is true that Bunyan pictures Christian and Faithful as tried at the assizes, for they were brought before a judge of assize, not before a chairman of quarter sessions, and they were

arraigned, not merely indicted. But in his time both sessions and assizes were held in the chapel of Herne.

Unfortunately we can find nothing of this building now. It was situated at the south-west corner of the churchyard of St. Paul, and was perhaps what was called in mediæval times a church-house. Afterwards, when the grammar-school was built, it was known sometimes as the School-house chapel. But as we cannot say anything precise about this building, and as we cannot affirm that Bunyan had it in his mind when he described the trial scene, we must pass it by.

The next place at which the pilgrims arrive—but Christian has now Hopeful as his companion in place of the martyred Faithful—is the Silver Mine of Demas, situated on Lucre Hill, “in the plain called Ease.”

Are we going to find a silver mine in Bedfordshire? Well, we are going one better, as a school-boy would say, and we are going to find a gold mine. The village of Pulloxhill is the place where the discovery is to be made, and it is situated, as its name

implies, on a hill, about six miles south of Ampthill.

The name Gold Mine is still marked on the Ordnance map, and workings have been carried on almost within the memory of man, but it was discovered that the very small yield of the precious metal did not repay the expense of working. When the mine was first worked we cannot say, but Lysons, in his "*Magna Britannia*," speaks of the matter thus:—"It has been said indeed that gold ore was formerly discovered at Pulloxhill, and that an attempt was made to work a mine there." But then he goes on to suggest that all that was found was a "mass of shining yellow talc with a yellow earthy matter mixed with it." But something more than yellow talc was, it seems, really discovered. Now it is very possible that the existence of gold had been known and the mine worked before the time of Bunyan; perhaps even in his days the working was carried on. No doubt the fact of gold being discoverable in Bedfordshire made a good deal of sensation in this neighbourhood; and Bunyan seizing this bit of local excitement worked

it into his story. He describes the mine as situated on a hill rising from a level plain, and this is an exact description of the situation of Pulloxhill. He has, however, for some reason altered the gold mine into a silver mine.

The description of the mine itself as a pit with treacherous ground, likely to give way, round its edge, has evidently been borrowed from the chalk pits on the Chilterns, which we shall come to when we describe the *Delectable Mountains*.

The strange-looking monument which the travellers came to as they left the plain cannot be identified with any particular object in the same direction. Bunyan says: "It seemed to them as if it had been a woman transformed into the shape of a pillar," and the writing upon the head thereof was 'remember Lot's wife.'" It is possible that Bunyan may have had in his mind some dilapidated wayside cross which, denuded of its arms, might give the impression of a roughly-hewn female figure. There is the stump of such an erection at Cardington Cross, a very short distance from Elstow, and in Bunyan's time it

is very probable that there was something more.

We have in these stages of the "Pilgrim's Progress" moved about from one spot to another without any due order of sequence such as would be the case if we were following one road. In the next part of the journey we hope to find the scenes more closely connected physically.

CHAPTER V.

DOUBTING CASTLE.

The Flit—Clophill Village—The Old Bridge—"Bye-path Meadow"—Cainhoe Castle—Ancient Earthworks.—The Keep of Albini and St. Amand—The Castle Yards of "Doubting Castle," its Dungeon and its Gates—The Family of De Grey.

IF we pass through the woods, and descend the hills about two miles to the south-east of Houghton House, we find ourselves in a very pretty valley, that of the little River Flit, which rises at Flitwick and flows through Flitton, and therefore gives their names to both these places. A very pretty stream it is just here, and Bunyan, if he had it in his mind when he wrote, as we think he had, speaks of it as a "pleasant river, which David the King called the river of God."

By the side of this river Christian and Hopeful walked "with great delight." "On

the banks of this river, on either side, were green trees for all manner of fruit ;” and “on either side of the river was a meadow curiously beautified with lilies, and it was green all the year long.”

The village of Clophill straggles along by the side of the stream. Its ancient church, now no longer used for services, save as a burial chapel, stands at a distance on a high hill, and from the churchyard there is a beautiful view over the valley which we are describing. The village street lies at right angles to the main London road, and runs alongside the river.

An ancient stone bridge of three arches, on which a modern brick parapet has been unfortunately placed, crosses the stream in the middle of the village, and if we pass over this bridge, we may either continue along the highway towards Silsoe, or we may turn westward down the valley. It is all exactly as Bunyan describes it. The pilgrims were “not a little sorry,” since “the river and the way for a time parted,” and so they “were much discouraged because of the way.” . . . “Now,



Clophill Bridge.
(Entrance to Bye-path Meadow.)



a little before them, there was on the left hand of the road a meadow, and a stile to go over into it, and that meadow is called Bye-path Meadow."

Did John Bunyan ever allow himself to stroll along this pleasant waterside, instead of pursuing his way whither his work or his duty called him? At any rate, we mean to cross the stile, and follow his pilgrims into Bye-path Meadow, and see what we can find at the end of it. We know what happened to the pilgrims. The false guide, Vain Confidence, led them astray, and fell into a pit himself. His two followers, overtaken by the night, wandered about for a time, till, in danger of falling into the flooded river, they laid themselves down in a little shelter, and there slept until they were found in the early morning by Giant Despair. The giant arrests them for "trespassing" and "trampling" in his meadows, and then drags them off to his castle. Could it be that Bunyan, wandering here as a boy through the standing grass, was once pounced upon by a surly farmer? If only we could know what memories passed through

his mind as he wrote, what delightful little touches should we find.

We pass further on down the stream, leaving behind the trim little gardens which run down from the backs of the Clophill houses to the river, and in rather less than a mile see, rising high above the river, a huge earthwork. We have already noted that earthworks abound in the Ouse valley, and therefore we are not surprised to find one here in that of the Flit.

Whether this earthwork is prehistoric or not we cannot say. In all probability it is. Earlier dwellers in this island raised on the river's banks strongholds, which were occupied by those men who came after them. Something of the later history of this earthwork, which is called *Cainhoe*, is known. The name seems to point to an early history, but we know that it was some time after the Conquest the property of a younger branch of the famous family of Albini, who on this mound built themselves a castle keep. Later on the heiress of this family married into that of St. Amand, and the latter were here in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Not a stone now remains above ground of

this home of Albini and St. Amand, and it is with difficulty we can make out where the buildings stood, though we can locate with sufficient accuracy the mound once crowned by the keep, and the position of the baileys or castle yards. The whole mass is picturesque in its verdure-clad ruggedness, and its situation is delightful, standing as it does in the midst of the pretty valley, and we may well say of it, as did King Duncan when gazing on Cawdor—

“ This castle hath a pleasant seat ; the air
Nimble and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.”

There was possibly something of the masonry still standing in Bunyan's days, perhaps a portion of the keep itself, or of some vault or cellar which his imagination would convert into the “ very dark dungeon, nasty and stinking,” into which Giant Despair cast the two pilgrims ; for it is here at Cainhoe that we propose to locate Doubting Castle.

Cainhoe Castle was, as we have seen, a building of the later Norman period, and as it was erected on an ancient mound, it must have

been built with what is commonly called a shell keep. Mr. George Clark, who is one of the



Cainhoe Castle Keep.
(Doubting Castle.)

greatest—probably the greatest—of all authorities on the castles of our land, indeed

expressly mentions that Clophill Castle, as he names it, was so built.

The keep, as everyone knows, was the central and strongest part of a castle, the last refuge of the besieged; the place which was always provisioned and furnished, where matters were carried on in right fashion, and in which—and this was an absolute necessity—there was a well of water. With food and water, and with a good supply of cross-bow bolts, and a sufficiency of lead ready to be poured down in a molten state, through openings in the battlements, on to the heads of the besiegers, those within might fairly laugh at those without.

The huge solid keeps, rectangular in form, which we see in places at the present day, could only be built on solid ground, and on mounds such as that at Cainhoe the keeps were built circular in form, and much lighter in character. They took the place of the timber erections which had crowned these mounds in earlier days before the Conquest, and, indeed, immediately after it.

The walls of these keeps—they were some-

times polygonal without and circular within—were from eight to ten feet in thickness, and they were always built well within the outer edge of the mound or earthwork on which they stood. They were not very lofty, some twenty or five-and-twenty feet in height, and there was a rampart walk on the summit. A wooden staircase led to this walk from the inside, and the interior was also fitted with the necessary rooms for the use of the governor and his garrison. These rooms were also of wood. In fact all the arrangements were very different from those of the solid, square keeps, with their various floors, their staircases, their galleries, and their many apartments, all constructed in masonry. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the square keeps have survived to such an extent, while the shell keeps, although probably rather later in date, have perished.

The keep was not used continually as the residence of the Lord of the castle. In peaceful times he had his dwelling in one of the yards or baileys, in which also would be the lodgings for his men; but in troublous times, and

when there was danger of an attack, all huddled together within the security of the walls. The entrance door of a shell-keep was usually small and plain, and there seem to have been none of those architectural embellishments which marked the buildings of the other character.

A ditch, which could be crossed by a wooden drawbridge, would run round the mound, and below the mound would be two yards or enclosures, called the outer bailey and the inner bailey respectively. These enclosures would not surround the mound, but would be behind one another on one side of it. At Clophill they were on the western side, and the mound itself with the circular shell-keep on the top of it was therefore at the eastern end, and was protected by a ditch and the marshes. It seems as though there were some remains of the baileys still existing in Bunyan's time, for Giant Despair's wife, Diffidence, counselled her husband to take the prisoners into the *castle yard* and show them the bones and skulls of those who had been already slain by him. Again, when at length Christian snatches from his bosom the key

promise, he finds that it unlocks the *dungeon door*, the outer *door into the castle yard*, and the *iron door*, the last one of all, through which he passed into freedom. It is true that Bunyan has here evidently before him the escape of the Apostle Peter through "the first and the second ward," and then out "through the iron gate that leadeth into the city," but it is very possible that he may also have had some recollection of what he had seen at Cainhoe.

With regard to the dungeon, it does not follow that there is, or was, actually such a place as Bunyan describes. There is a popular delusion that all castles had a horrible hole down amongst the foundations in which languished unfortunate prisoners. There *was* in rectangular keeps a dark chamber, not below the level, but on the ground floor, though unlighted by windows for safety's sake. This was probably used as a store-room, though it may have been in part, though this is not proved, used as a prison. Anyhow, stores would hardly have been kept in a damp place from which there was no drainage. As for the

shell keeps, we have seen that they did not possess any stone-built apartments at all, whether cells, prisons, or otherwise, but that they were simply hollow cylinders of masonry, within which wooden erections were built as required. Bunyan had probably accepted the common tradition of an underground cell. The word *dungeon*, or, as it should be written, *dongeon*, means, we may observe, the whole tower, and it was only in late use that it came to mean a prison or *oubliette*.

After the time of the St. Amand family, Cainhoe passed through several hands until it came into the family of De Croy, better known to us as that of De Grey, though their original name, of which the later form is a corruption, proclaims their origin from the town of Croy in Picardy. The Greys were at Wrest, which is about a mile from Cainhoe, from the thirteenth century, and in the time of Bunyan there lived in the old house in Wrest Park, which was pulled down in 1830, Amabel, widow of Henry De Grey, ninth Earl of Kent, who had fought on the Parliamentary side in the Civil Wars. This lady was usually known as the "good

countess," and she kept the house at Wrest during a long widowhood of forty-five years. An inscription on her monument in one of the burial chambers of the family attached to Flitton church, tells her virtues, and records "her exemplary piety and regular devotion in her chappell, whereto she obliged all her domesticks every morning and evening to attend her." She died in her ninety-second year, and as she had been born in 1606, she lived nearly through the whole of the stirring seventeenth century.

The old lady's virtues were not unconnected with matters of this world, as the inscription also informs us, for she was a most careful steward of the Wrest property, "continually adding to the profit or ornament of the place." The monument on which the inscription is to be found was erected by the countess soon after the death of her husband, but the words of the inscription were added by her grandson, Henry, who became the first and only Duke of Kent of the De Grey family.

Bunyan had doubtless heard of the charitable disposition of this great lady, and it is very

possible he may have seen her, and perhaps he had some such person in his mind when he was drawing the pictures of some of his Christian matrons. But as we are occupied with places rather than with persons, we must not enlarge further on members of the De Grey family.

Christian and Hopeful, after they had escaped from Doubting Castle, made their way back across the meadow, and over the stile, till they reached the king's highway. That is, they were again on the main road from Bedford to Luton and London. But before they continued their journey they placed near the stile a notice warning travellers of the neighbourhood of the castle of Giant Despair. Had Bunyan seen some notice warning trespassers set up here by the occupier of the meadows, who had, according to our little invention, caught him when a youngster in the mowing grass?

There is no doubt but that, in addition to his talent for reading character, Bunyan had an observant eye from which nothing escaped. Whatever he noticed in the way of local topo-

graphy, that is, as regards hills and valleys, streams and rivers, houses, or towns, or walls, he has reproduced for us in the pages of the "Pilgrim's Progress," and the pretty valley of the Flit, with its quiet, peaceful, pastoral scenery, and its relics of former days, has found its place therein.

CHAPTER VI.

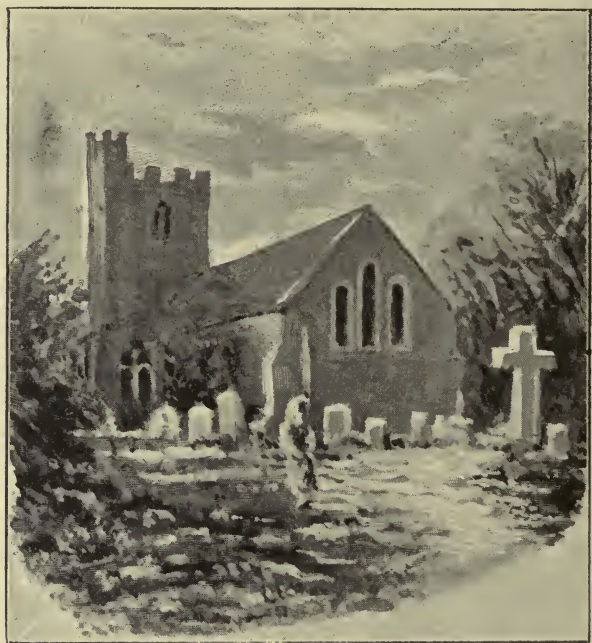
THE DELECTABLE MOUNTAINS.

The Chilterns—Totternhoe Stone—The Deep Coombes—The Flowers and the Flocks—Chalk Pits—Ancient Fortifications—Hut-circles—Barrows—"The Hill of Error"—"The Hill of Caution"—"The Door in the Side of the Hill"—The View from "Mount Clear."

WHEN we were at Houghton House we observed that the view of the Chiltern Hills which is to be obtained, if not from the house itself, at any rate from the ridge at the upper end of the park, makes us suppose that Bunyan had this view in his mind when he described Christian as looking from the roof of the House Beautiful southwards towards the *Delectable Mountains*.

The part of the Chilterns which we see from this ridge is about six or seven miles away from Houghton, and about five from Cainhoe Castle,

and Bunyan conducts the Pilgrim straight to the Delectable Mountains without a pause. At their foot, if we are right in supposing that



Church, Barton-le-Cley.

these mountains and the Chiltern Hills at this particular point are one and the same, lies the little village of Barton-le-Cley, with its hand-

some church and its long-windowed seven-



Looking up the Long Valley, Barton-le-Cley.
(The Delectable Mountains.)

teenth-century rectory-house. From behind the house we ascend at once by a steep path

from the level plain in which the village stands, to the lofty hills which in the winter seem to shut in Barton from the sun.

Our author has somewhat embellished the Chilterns by clothing them with "gardens, orchards, and vineyards," for they are like all other hills of this geological formation, almost entirely naked and bare, and we leave gardens and orchards behind us in the plain at their feet, when we begin to climb their flanks. The "fountains of water" which he also mentions we may, however, easily discover, for the streams burst out from the sides of the hills with marvellous strength and abundance. Probably Bunyan had in his mind the pretty Rectory-garden, which we may conclude existed in his time, with its mossy turf, its pools, and its running streams.

William Camden, Clarenceux King-at-Arms to Elizabeth, and the first man in our country to start the science of antiquarianism, derives the name of Chiltern from the British word *cylt*, which we now term chalk, and chalk is certainly the principal feature of these hills. The lowest formation in their structure, speak-

ing geologically, is chalk marl, which is in places eighty feet in thickness. Above this is Totternhoe stone, a brownish sandy stone with dark grains. We shall have occasion to suppose that Bunyan visited the Totternhoe quarries, which are not very far distant to the westward. Above this useful material, which has supplied the building material for many churches in the neighbourhood, is the lower chalk, a bed four hundred feet in thickness. The upper portion of this is called chalk rock, and a very hard substance it is. On the top of this is the upper chalk, which is some three hundred feet deep.

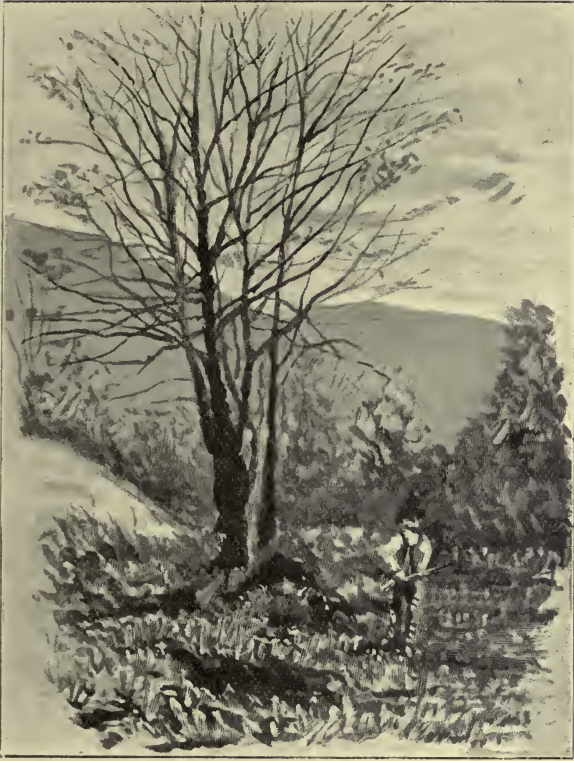
The Chilterns rise, as we have already mentioned, very steeply on their north-western flanks from the oolite plain which stretches away in that direction, and it is here, therefore, that we find the deep coombes which form so distinguishing a feature of chalk districts. Many of these coombes or valleys are of great natural beauty, being well clothed with curious old gnarled box-trees, and here we find the streams which gush out so copiously. But, above, the rounded hills are covered with short turf, and their wide expanse is broken only by



an occasional clump of small firs artificially planted, or by a few straggling thorn-trees.

But if the Chiltern Hills do not furnish vegetation of a larger growth, they are rich in flowers. Had Bunyan been anything of a flower-lover we think we should have found some allusion to this. The *anemone pulsatilla*, or Pasque flower, is to be found everywhere on these chalk hills, together with many orchids.

Sheep are pastured on every part of these downs, and this is a fact of which Bunyan certainly took notice, for the whole scene on the Delectable Mountains is concerned with the shepherds *Knowledge*, *Experience*, *Watchful*, and *Sincere*. They are said to dwell in *tents*. Here Bunyan is evidently referring to what he had read in the Old Testament, for, as is but natural, all through his writings his own observations are mingled with Biblical reminiscences. The sheep roam at will over the unfenced downs, and consequently we hear in this neighbourhood the tinkle of the sheep-bell, which is not common elsewhere. It is a very different country from that Ouse valley in which Bunyan had been born and bred. No wonder



The Springs at Barton-le-Cley.
(The Delectable Mountains.)



that when he wished to bring before his readers some different world to that which surrounded the City of Destruction, he chose as his Delectable Mountains the rolling uplands of the Chilterns and their breezy summits, and the life-giving air, and the views into the far distance which the climber may have beneath him when he has toiled up their steep white sides.

But there is another industry besides that of sheep-keeping on the Chilterns. The chalk is burnt here into lime, and the pits from which it has been cut offer here and there dangerous precipices with white gleaming faces.

And there are traces too, not a few, of the earlier inhabitants of the country. High up, in strong, easily defended positions, we find camps of large extent, circular or rectangular, such as those at Ravensburgh and Totternhoe. The former stands in a commanding position on that portion of the downs which we have now reached. It is a large camp in the shape of a parallelogram, and contains about twelve acres. Some would have us see in its name an allusion to the *Raven*, the ensign of the Danish invaders. Others see in that name a corruption

of the word *Roman*. Both these derivations are fanciful enough, and it is safer simply to affirm that it is an ancient earthwork which commanded the British way called Icknield Street, which here runs along the edge of the hills, and that it may have been occupied by the Romans, without being actually what we usually call a Roman camp, as Roman remains have been found in it and near to it.

The careful observer may also trace out, in what the children call fairy rings, the sites of huts, or hut-circles, the dwellings of much earlier people than Romans or Danes. Moreover, there are memorials of the dead as well, for tumuli, the burial mounds of ancient days, are to be found nearly everywhere, and there are many good specimens of those round ones with encircling ditch, which look as if children of large growth and considerable spade power had been playing at castle-building. And these tumuli did Bunyan observe and note, though he knew not and cared not whether there slept beneath the body of Saxon earl or Danish chieftain. He sought only an allegory for his tale.



The Long Valley. The Barton Hills.
(The heart of the Delectable Mountains.)

For we propose to show that everything which he describes as visible on the *Delectable Mountains* is to be found here at the present day, the byeway to hell not excepted. When we have compared our description with that of Bunyan, we think it will be plain whence he borrowed his imagery for this particular part of the journey of Christian and Hopeful. The only exceptions which we propose to make are those which we have already mentioned, the existence of vineyards on the hill-side, and the tent dwellings of the shepherds where the travellers passed the night.

In the morning, when the shepherds proposed to show the pilgrims some of the sights of the mountains, they led them first to the *Hill of Error*. The principal feature about this deadly hill was that at one side it was "very steep." Now the Chilterns are climbable anywhere. There are no natural precipices such as we may meet with amongst other geological formations. The hand of man, however, has constructed artificial precipices where it has cut away the chalk for burning in the lime-kilns. Bunyan had doubtless come sud-

K



denly in his wanderings over the downs to some such chalk-pit, and had looked down from the brink into the white hole beneath him, and as he gazed he thought how but a step lay between him and death, and he has accordingly described for us the fate of those who were "made to err by hearkening to Hymenæus and Philetus."

The next height to which Christian and Hopeful were conducted was the hill *Caution*. Here Bunyan tells us that we are among the tombs, those rounded knolls which mark the resting-places of former warriors. The unfortunate wanderers who had been deprived of their eyesight by the bloody giant Despair, had been brought there by a path which led direct from Doubting Castle to the hills, and "they walked up and down among the tombs that were there," in their blindness "stumbling sometimes upon the tombs" themselves, and unable to "get out from among them."

When their conductors led the pilgrims to the next sight, they would have a somewhat longer journey to take. We have already mentioned the Totternhoe quarries whence the

stone has been hewn to build so many of the churches in the plain below. Even the Abbey Church of St. Alban was in part built with this stone, for when transport was a difficult matter men built with what they found to their hands.

This building stone with which we are now concerned—we have already described its geological formation—does not seem to have been always quarried from an open face as in a chalk-pit, but it was sometimes won from the interior of the hills and brought to the surface through horizontal shafts. It is no longer quarried in this neighbourhood, but near the camp on the hill above Totternhoe we can still find an ancient working with its tunnel. This is now walled up, and we cannot penetrate within its recesses, but it may be that in the days of Bunyan it was in working order, and as he passed by he may have looked into the gloomy passage, and heard the noise of the workers, and perhaps have seen the flash and heard the rumble of an explosion, for so hard is this rock that at times it has to be blasted. What he saw and heard enabled him to write.

of "the door in the side of a hill," where "within it was very dark and smoky," and where was heard "a rumbling noise as of fire, and a cry of some tormented, and that they smelt the scent of brimstone."

But the scenes on the Delectable Mountains close with one more pleasurable than this which shows Christian and Hopeful gazing into the mouth of hell. Just before the two pilgrims left their kind friends the shepherds they were taken to the summit of another hill, called *Clear*, and were bidden to look through the *perspective glass* and discover the gate of the Celestial City. But so upset were they with the terrible sight which they had just seen, that their hands were unable to hold the glass steadily. Perchance Bunyan once himself stood breathless on one of the chalk ridges, and some friend bade him take a peep through a "perspective glass" which he found it difficult to hold without shaking.

And which was Mount Clear, and in which direction did the pilgrims look to see the Celestial City? Well, there are plenty of summits which command a vast expanse of

country, for in places the Chilterns rise to a considerable height. In the neighbourhood of



Looking East from Sharpenhoe Clump.
(The View from the Delectable Mountains.)

Dunstable they are eight hundred feet high, and Dunstable is not far distant. It is on the

north-west side that the finest views are to be obtained; for, as we have already noticed, it is here that the hills rise abruptly from the plain, while in the other directions they are composed of long ridges and uplands which gradually descend to the valley of the Lea.

We may therefore select any hill-top hereabouts as the prototype of Mount Clear, and we may suppose that Bunyan had simply in his mind's eye a view of the plain of Middle Bedfordshire as he had often seen it, when he gave us the description of the shepherds and their Delectable Mountains. And as to the gate of the *Celestial City*, we may locate it where we please in our view. We hope to show later on that when Bunyan was describing the actual passage of the pilgrims through the river, he took some of his details from what he had seen on the banks of the Ouse. But it is different when he represents the pilgrims as gazing at it in the far distance, and finding it hazy and indistinct.

“ The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples— ”

We leave these for the present unidentified.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAST STAGES.

Scantiness of Description—"Deadman's Lane,"—"The Enchanted Ground"—"The Land of Beulah"—The Suburbs of Bedford in the Seventeenth Century—The Hospital of St. John, its Garden and its Gardener.

As Bunyan brings us to the end of the journey, he certainly becomes less definite as to the road, and surely his subject so requires it. He is nearing the climax of his tale; he is approaching the goal. He has brought his pilgrims to their old age. He proposes to give them peace and quiet. Dangers and difficulties are to be almost, if not entirely, things of the past.

In consequence, we shall not be able to trace his steps along Bedfordshire roads and up Bedfordshire hills to such an extent as we have been able to do hitherto. We must

content ourselves with a fragment here and there, which tells us of what he saw and knew, and we shall find that realism will give way for the most part to imagination. But where we *are* to find little traces of actual description, we shall meet with them as we return from the Chiltern Hills towards Bedford.

It has often been observed that just here the author makes a break in his story, and for no apparent reason. "So I awoke from my dream," and then he continues at once, without any pause, "And I slept and dreamed again." What was the reason for this break, so unnecessary as it seems to us? Dr. John Brown, Bunyan's fullest biographer, suggests in explanation that the "Pilgrim's Progress" was written up to this point within the walls of the borough gaol on Bedford Bridge, and that the awaking from sleep refers to his release from his second imprisonment, which lasted for about six months, and had been occupied by Bunyan in the production of his allegory up to this point. The latter part, he concludes, was finished when Bunyan was at liberty again, but without any long interval ensuing, for we

are called upon to note that he "slept and dreamed again."

Now it is evident that in these last pages there is less incident, and the pilgrims are hurried on in their journey without pause of any account. This, perhaps, was the result of Bunyan having other pressing matters to occupy him now that he was out in the world again. He missed his leisure for literary composition.

But we are not now concerned with the plot of the story, but with what descriptions of scenes and places we may find in it, and these descriptions are decidedly not so plentiful as they were before.

As Hopeful and Christian descend the Delectable Mountains with the "Note of the Way" in their hands, and the warning voice of the shepherds to "beware of the flatterer" still ringing in their ears, they come to "a little crooked lane," down which comes the "brisk lad, Ignorance." There are crooked lanes in plenty to be found in Bedfordshire, and the name seems only to be introduced to show that Ignorance had not come in at "the straight

gate." This crooked lane, then, need not detain us, though Ignorance calls it "a fine pleasant green lane." It is possibly one of those treeless, broad chalk roads with a bank on each side, which run up the Chilterns between the strips of arable land.

But when Hopeful and Christian, leaving Ignorance for a time behind them, proceed along their way, they enter another lane, "a very dark" one, where they meet the seven devils carrying a wretched man bound with seven cords to the door in the side of the hill. The place answering the nearest to this description would be where the road might be bounded by the chalk hills rising precipitously above it on either hand, as they do in many places. At any rate, we shall locate these lanes somewhere on the lower slopes of the hills.

And presently Christian remarks to his companion that he is reminded of the story of Little-Faith, and then goes on to tell him how that luckless individual was set upon, robbed, and nearly murdered, by the rascals Faintheart, Mistrust, and Guilt in "Deadman's Lane," which "comes down from Broadway Gate."

And moreover he states that this lane is "so called because of the murders that are commonly done there." Not altogether a pleasant description is this of the particular part of the county with which we have to do, but we are only about to assume that Bunyan borrowed a name which was a convenient one for certain localities.

The name is indeed common enough in many places. We have all read how in the Borderland—

"The fierce Thirlwalls, and Ridleys all,
Stout Willimondswick,
And hard-riding Dick,
And Hughie of Hawdon, and Will o' the Wall,
Have set on Sir Albany Featherstonhaugh,
And taken his life in the *Deadman's shaw*."

And Bunyan had the same familiar name close at hand.

For not far from Elstow, on the hills which divide the valley of the Ouse from that of the Ivel, he would find at the corner of Shirehatch Wood, the *Deadman's Oak*, and on the great high road which led from Bedford to London he would find, at the top of Hanger Hill, *Deadman's corner*, and close to this *Deadman's*

cross. What the name may have been intended to commemorate we cannot quite say. Bunyan tells, as we noticed just now, that it was given to mark the scene of a murder. In more probability it was the figure of the murderer himself hanging in chains from a wayside gibbet which caused the villagers to give to certain spots this gruesome appellation.

The tale, however, as told by Bunyan, speaks of highway robbery, and such acts of violence were by no means uncommon in his day ; for even so late as 1751 we learn that one " Gabriel Tomkins, who was executed for robbing the Chester mail, was hanged in chains near Bedford."

From Deadman's Lane the pilgrims go on to the *Enchanted Ground*, a sort of sleepy hollow. Whether Bunyan had any particular place in his mind when he described poor Hopeful as saying to his comrade, " I do begin to grow so drowsy that I can scarcely hold open my eyes," is a question. Perhaps he was merely describing his own sensations when, after a tiring walk over the chalk downs, he returned to the lower ground, and in the more relaxing atmosphere

felt inclined to take a nap by the wayside before he made his way back to Elstow.

From the Enchanted Ground the pilgrims passed into the Land of Beulah, "whose air was very sweet and pleasant, the way lying directly through it, they solaced them for a season. Yea, they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw everyday the flowers appear on the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land. In this country the sun shineth night and day; wherefore it was beyond the valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair; neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle."

Certainly the description is that of a very pleasant part of the country, and we fancy that, to the present day, it may apply to many of the pretty villages which lie around the county town in Bedfordshire. In these villages thatched cottages cluster round the parish church, and high-ridged thatched barns surround the farmer's comfortable brick-built and tile-covered house, with its large central chimney-stack. The home-closes run right

up to the farmyards, and in these closes are large elms, the prevailing tree of Mid-Bedfordshire, in which have been established for generations colonies of rooks. Moreover, each cottage has its little garden, and in these grow many a fruit tree; and in some villages—unfortunately not in all—the roadside wastes form playing places for the cottagers' children.

As Christian and his companion approached the Celestial City, when they came, in fact, near enough to it to see that "it was built of pearls and precious stones, also the streets thereof were paved with gold," they found themselves, as "they walked on their way, and came yet nearer and nearer, where were orchards, vineyards, and gardens, and their gates opened into the highway." They have passed into a place of small, well-tilled enclosures, protected by fences and gates.

Such spots are usually to be found in the outskirts of a town, or at least were so to be found in the days when towns had not yet begun to spread themselves out, and sweep away well-cultivated garden and fruit-bearing orchard. And just such suburbs did Bedford



Old Houses, Wootton, from the Church Tower.



once possess. There is an old map, dated 1610, which shows us the town, with its streets and all the old buildings, in relief. But the special point with regard to our present purpose is that, in this map, gardens well planted with trees occupy not only the suburbs, but all the spaces at the back of the houses behind the streets. A few years later, in the time of Bunyan, the town had a population of only about two thousand; that is, there was not more than double the number of people in the county town itself than there is in many a village near it at the present day. We may conclude, therefore, that in the middle of the seventeenth century there were still, in the town itself, the gardens and orchards as they appear in Speed's map of 1610; and that anyone approaching the town from Elstow would, as he passed up John's Street and St. Mary's Street, make his way along just such a road as that described by Bunyan.

The way is described as commanding a "more perfect view" of the Heavenly City than the pilgrims had ever had before during their wanderings. To such an extent did they gaze

upon it in its glory and beauty that "Christian with desire fell sick;" and "Hopeful, also, had a fit or two of the same disease." And now they turned out of the road at the invitation of the gardener, and rested themselves in one of the various gardens and orchards. There were "the King's walks and arbours," the old, stiff-fashioned artificial work which our ancestors of two hundred and fifty years ago loved to create.

And there is still one such garden remaining on this road, and it is one which Bunyan must have known well, for it is the garden which was behind the old hospital of St. John and its ancient church. This garden was approached in former days by a gateway such as Bunyan describes, for such an entrance is shown in Speed's map. Doubtless Bunyan himself often passed through it, for here was the house of John Gifford, to whom he owed so much in the matter of spiritual life. Gifford had settled in Bedford in 1648, and became pastor of the Puritan body which gathered round him in 1650. He succeeded to the Masters of the Hospital of St. John, which had

been founded in 1280 by Robert de Parys, and his home was the Master's house, as it is to the present day the rectory house of the little parish which surrounds it.

John Gifford meets us more than once at the beginning of Christian's journey as Evangelist, and now he appears again at its close, as the royal gardener who holds open the gate, and invites the Pilgrim to enter and rest awhile. Gifford had been dead many many years when Bunyan wrote, but the interviews which had taken place, we may be sure, in that garden between the latter and his guide and pastor had never been forgotten. St. John's Hospital was, as it were, sacred ground to Bunyan.

The garden is no longer stiff and formal. The winding paths and shrubberies are the work of a different taste and of a later time, but here we have undoubtedly still in existence the original of that place of refreshment, into which the Pilgrim entered for a while in the last stage but one of his journey.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CELESTIAL CITY.

Bunyan's Description and Sunsets from the Ouse Valley—Cloud-land—The Gates—The Bridge and Gate-house—Ouse Floods and Shallows—King Offa's Tomb—St. Paul's Tower and its Bells.

It may possibly be supposed, from the description which we have given of the suburbs of Bedford in the last chapter, that we propose to make that town itself the prototype of the Celestial City. We have no intention of so doing. Let us turn to some of the descriptions of the place which Bunyan gives in his later pages, and we shall see that he is describing no city of earth, but that notwithstanding he had, when he wrote, the remembrance of a scene which he witnessed often enough as he walked through the flat wide-spreading meadows of the Ouse valley, or

stood where he had an uninterrupted view from the tableland of the Chilterns.

As the pilgrims walk through the land of Beulah, they note that the city is "built of pearls and precious stones, also the streets thereof were paved with gold." And again, when they have approached nearer and are in the company of the gardener, Bunyan particularly describes the reflection of the sun on the city, so that it "was so exceeding glorious that they could not as yet with open face behold it, but through an instrument made for that purpose."

Then let us look, also, at the description of the flight of the souls of the pilgrims when the river had been safely passed. "Now you must note that the city stood upon a mighty hill, but the pilgrims went up that hill with ease because they had these two to lead them up by the arms. They had likewise left their mortal garments behind them in the river, for though they went in with them, they came out without them. They therefore went up here with much agility and speed, though the foundation upon which the city was framed

was higher than the clouds. They therefore went up through the region of the air."

And almost at the close writes Bunyan :
"Now just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and behold the city shone like the sun, the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men with crowns upon their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal. There were also of them that had wings, and they addressed one another without intermission, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.' And after that they shut up the gates, which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

Now, of course, we admit fully that much of this description is taken from the Apocalypse, especially such passages as refer to the inhabitants of the city themselves, their crowns, their palms, their harps, and their songs of praise. Yes, and the pearls, and the precious stones, and the streets paved with gold; of all these had Bunyan read in his Bible.

But there is something more. The city is

lifted up above the earth, the pilgrims rise through the air to enter it, the sun's rays are cast upon it with dazzling brightness. What is this but the sky itself which Bunyan was describing, the western sky adorned by such a sunset as he had often seen as he passed along some eastern road back to Elstow or to Bedford on a summer evening, and had before him the beauty of sun-painted clouds. In such a scene Bunyan would find his city all aglow, his streets of gold, his precious stones, the sapphire towards the zenith, and the emerald down towards the horizon, where the blue has changed to green. Or, perchance, his face might be turned the other way, and he might have gazed on some heaped up mass of cumuli all tinged with the warm rich glow from the west. On such a cloud-land, Alp-like in its apparent solidity, he would place the "mighty hill" on which the city was built. And then, when the sun had sunk below the horizon, and the golden linings of the clouds, roll within roll and fold within fold, had turned in colour from rosy pink to deep red, and the bars of purple stood dark

and clear-cut across the scene, he would have before him the closing of the gates. And then at length the dusky curtain would fall, and the young Bedfordshire workman would trudge home in the gloaming to the cottage-home at Elstow and the evening meal.

When we described the gorge of Millbrook we only suggested that certain features in it would answer to some given us in the description of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and in what we have to say about Bedford as it was in the seventeenth century, we are only about to state that certain things in its appearance, from the outside more especially, might have given Bunyan some hints for his description of the approach to that city which formed the goal of his wayfarers.

The gate of the Celestial City is an important feature in the history of the pilgrims. They hear of it from time to time, and actually see it, though in distant haze, as they gaze from Mount Clear on the Delectable Mountains. A gate, then, was something which came distinctly to Bunyan's mind as he wrote, but Bedford was not, nor ever has been, a walled city.

But had it gates? Yes, both within and without. The old map to which we have referred shows us gateways through which the precincts of the hospitals and other religious houses were entered, and there were many of the latter in ancient Bedford—that of the Blackfriars, St. Loyes, St. John's, Cauldwell, and St. Leonard's. It was the latter which Bunyan would pass as he walked in and out of the town, and much of it must have been standing in his time, for the ruins were only destroyed when the London and North Western Railway Company made use of its site for their station. And domestic gateways there were as well, within the town, for to the present day there stands, a little back from the High Street, a stone gateway, which formed one of the entrances to the yard of the Old George Inn. Nor must we forget the two gate-houses with which John Bunyan was only too well acquainted—those which stood upon the venerable bridge which here spanned the Ouse. It was in the upper chamber over the northern of these gateways, “the den,” as he calls it, that Bunyan in all probability wrote,

or at least planned out, "Pilgrim's Progress." Thus Bedford, though it was without walls, was not without gates.

And for choice, we think that of all the gates we should select this old gate-house as the one which Bunyan had before him when he described the approach to the Celestial City. It is true that the gate-house stood on a bridge, and the special point of Bunyan's river is that there was no bridge across the river ; but it is with the gateway itself that we are concerned, and not with that whereon it stands.

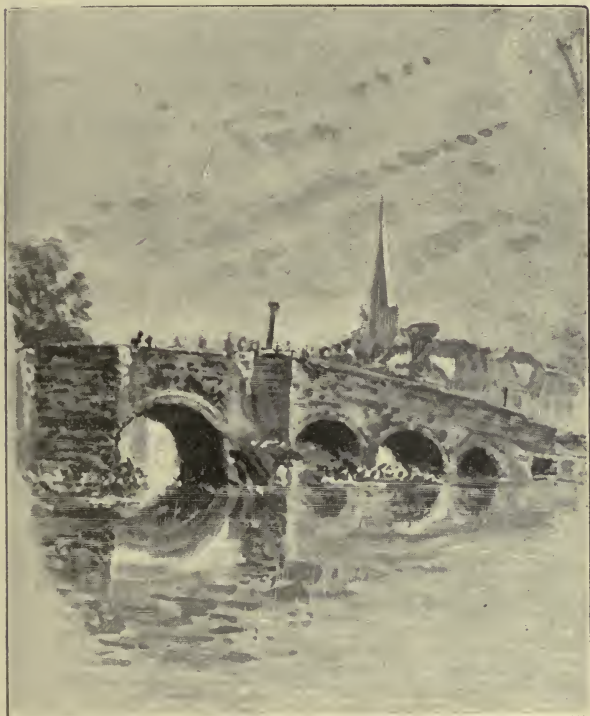
The gate-house, as well as the bridge itself, have disappeared. Both were of considerable antiquity, especially the bridge, which dated certainly from 1224, and perhaps from an earlier time. Though repaired again and again, at one time with material from the dismantled castle of the De Beauchamps, and at another with a portion of the destroyed church of St. Peter, Dunstable—so called because it belonged to Dunstable Priory—which stood till 1545 in St. Mary's Square, it lasted well into this century, the present bridge not having been opened until 1813. The gate-houses had,



Bedford Bridge and Gate-house.
(From an old print.)



however, disappeared before that date, but we know them by engravings. They were, as we



Bedford Old Bridge at the beginning of last century.

(From a drawing by T. Hearne.)

have mentioned, two in number, and on the down-stream side of the northern one there

was a little island sufficiently large to be cultivated as a garden. But this island has also disappeared, though a shoal may be detected at the spot when the river is low.

Though Bedford was perfectly open on all other sides, more than half of it was fully protected on the southern or river side, and the bridge, moreover, was duly guarded, and the warder at one time was commanded to close the thoroughfare nightly at ten o'clock, and to allow none to pass unless he knew them, and then also to charge a penny toll. It seems strange that so much difficulty should have been placed in the way of those who wished to pass from one part of the town to another, since both parts of Bedford were equally free and open everywhere else. But we have said enough to show that the gate-house on Bedford bridge would give Bunyan the idea of a carefully guarded approach such as that which formed the entrance to the Celestial City; and it is to be noted that he tells how, in answer to the call of the pilgrims, "some from above looked over the gate, to wit, Enoch, Moses, and Elijah." He himself doubtless often

looked down from his prison window on the wayfarers who summoned the warder to unlock the great chain, and produced their penny toll, and who were then recognised and identified according to the rules and regulations framed by the corporation.

But before the pilgrims reached the gate they had to cross the river. There was but one river which Bunyan would have before him as he drew near to the end of his tale, the one large river of his native county. The Ouse in its characteristics much resembles that river which forms the last stage in the journey which Bunyan describes. At times, as we have already mentioned, the waters from the central Midlands sweep down its valley in a far-reaching flood, extending over the meadows which line its banks. At other times the shrinking of its waters reveals shallows and hidden islands. A tradition, quoted by so early a writer as Matthew Paris, tells us that the chapel on the river's bank in which had been buried the body of Offa, the great King of Saxon Mercia, was swept away by a flood. And he adds that the tomb

of the king could be seen at times in the summer by bathing lads, if they sought it not, but that those who looked for it sought in vain. And even just before the time of Bunyan's imprisonment in the gate-house, that building had been wrecked by the water to such an extent that "ye ston house called ye bridge-house in this towne is totallie fallen down, and ye rest much shaken and like to fall, and the foundacon or pile whereon it stood, a great part washed away." The building, it appears, was repaired only just in time to receive the prisoner.

And then at other times the river was fordable hereabouts, as the name of the town implies. It is, in fact, just such a river as Bunyan describes when he says, "You shall find it deeper or shallower, as ye believe in the King of the place."

But Bunyan tells us not only of what he saw, but of what he heard. "Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy."

The tower and tall spire of St. Paul's Church rise conspicuously on the further side of the



St. Paul's Tower, Bedford, from the south side of the river.



river. It is not exactly the same tower which Bunyan saw, for it has been rebuilt, but on the old lines. Doubtless Bunyan, as he walked along the road from Elstow, often heard the sweet chimes of the St. Paul's bells wafted to him across the Ouse. They reminded him of his own bellringing in early youth, which he had discontinued, for some unknown reason, so suddenly.

"Square tower,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the listening ear."

But none of the bells are of Bunyan's time. They have all been renewed or recast, and their number has been added to until they have become a peal of ten.

Thus far we have gone, and now we stand. We do not propose to follow the pilgrims across the river, nor to mix scenes mundane with celestial. Bunyan has, as we have suggested, entered cloud-land for the last and abiding scene, and he has left familiar Bedfordshire behind. But we have walked awhile with him along lane and high road, past park and village green, up steep hills, and through

wooded dells. There is an intense realism, all acknowledge, in the characters which play their part in the "Pilgrim's Progress"; and perhaps we shall acknowledge that there is much realism also in the scenes in which these characters move, now that, with his book in our hands, we have made our way through Bunyan's country.

THE END.





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